

JAMES HERVEY'S THERON AND ASPASIO

AND

THE CONTROVERSY AROUSED BY IT

BY

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## PREFACE

When James Hervey published his Theron and Aspasio in 1755, an uneasy peace had prevailed in the Calvinistic Controversy for a number of years. The initial stage of the Controversy began with a correspondence between John Wesley and George Whitefield which has been wittily summed up as follows: "Dear George, I have read what you have written on the subject of Predestination, and God has taught me to see that you are wrong and that I am right. Yours affectionately, J. Wesley"; "Dear John, I have read what you have written on the subject of Predestination, and God has taught me that I am right and you are wrong. Yours affectionately, G. Whitefield."

Wesley and Whitefield became estranged, and a small pamphlet war ensued. The conciliatory efforts of Howell Harris and the Countess of Huntingdon soon restored a certain measure of amity to the scene. The two leaders were reconciled and remained friends, but the Tabernacle had gone up alongside the Foundry, and thereafter there were two kinds of Methodists.

The publication of Hervey's book initiated the second stage of the Calvinistic Controversy, which then took the form of a dispute about the imputed righteousness of Christ. This dispute lasted until 1768 when the expulsion of six Calvinistic Methodist students from the University of Oxford precipitated the third and final stage of the Controversy.



Theron and Aspasio also gave rise to a debate over the nature of saving faith. Hervey's doctrine of faith was challenged by the Glassite leader, Robert Sandeman, and several others were quickly drawn into the contest.

This is a study of James Hervey, his book, and the controversy which he aroused. The literature of this controversy has not received a great amount of attention. Most historians in touching upon the controversy have seemed to take a considerable amount of satisfaction in declaring that an analysis of its literature was beyond the scope of their inquiry. It has been my purpose to examine this literature in detail, to sift it, and to present, as best I could, its essential arguments.

This was a bitter controversy, and much of the language is highly abusive. In order to preserve something of the original flavor I have not hesitated to include a fair sample of the invectives.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my thanks to my advisers, Principal John Baillie and Professor T. F. Torrance, and to Principal Emeritus Hugh Watt for the help and encouragement which they have given me. I wish also to express my appreciation for the friendly assistance given by the librarians and staffs of the various libraries in Edinburgh, London, Oxford, Cambridge, Glasgow, and Northampton where I gathered the material for this study.

Unless otherwise indicated all citations to Theron and Aspasio are to the first edition, octavo, and those to William Cudworth's Defence of Theron and Aspasio, to the second edition. All citations to Sandeman's Letters on Theron and Aspasio are to the fourth edition. The General Collection of Hervey's letters which has been used is that in his Works, where the letters are numbered consecutively and are more nearly in chronological order than they are in the two-volume edition. One final note: the American system of spelling and punctuation has been used throughout.

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## CHAPTER I

### THE AUTHOR OF THERON AND ASPASIO

James Harvey was born on February 26, 1713-14, in the village of Hardington just outside of Northampton. His father was rector of Collingtree some two miles from Hardington, and his grandfather, of Weston Favell, twice that far in the opposite direction. The patronage of both parishes had been in the possession of the family for many years.<sup>1</sup> The Harveys appear to have been highly respectable. One ancestor had been a member of Parliament for Northampton, and another, a judge.<sup>2</sup> In more prosperous times the family of Hardington,<sup>3</sup> but they were no longer wealthy, and as the living of Collingtree was small, Harvey's father found it necessary to supplement his income by farming.<sup>4</sup>

## PART I

### THERON AND ASPASIO

Little has been recorded about Harvey's early years. At the age of seven he was sent to the Free Grammar School in Northampton to study Latin and Greek.<sup>5</sup> In neither was his learning prodigious, however, for the master refused to allow any of the

<sup>1</sup>Salzman, *The Victoria History of the County of Northamptonshire*, IV:111.

<sup>2</sup>*Northampton Mercury*, June 17, 1904.

<sup>3</sup>W. H. W. Brown, *The Pollard Chaff*, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup>Colt, *Harvey's Letters of Harvey*, p. 6.

<sup>5</sup>Salzman, *The Character of the Rev. James Harvey*, p. 147.

## CHAPTER I

### THE AUTHOR OF THERON AND ASPASIO

James Hervey was born on February 26, 1713-14, in the village of Hardingstone just outside of Northampton. His father was rector of Collingtree some two miles from Hardingstone, and his grandfather, of Weston Favell, twice that far in the opposite direction. The patronage of both parishes had been in the possession of the family for many years.<sup>1</sup> The Herveys appear to have been highly respectable. One ancestor had been a member of Parliament for Northampton, and another, a judge.<sup>2</sup> In more prosperous times they had owned the manor of Hardingstone,<sup>3</sup> but they were no longer wealthy, and as the living of Collingtree was small, Hervey's father found it necessary to supplement his income by farming.<sup>4</sup>

Little has been recorded about Hervey's early years. At the age of seven he was sent to the Free Grammar School in Northampton to study Latin and Greek.<sup>5</sup> In neither was his learning prodigious, however, for the master refused to allow any of the

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<sup>1</sup>Salzman, The Victoria History of the Counties of England; Northamptonshire, IV:111.

<sup>2</sup>Northampton Mercury, June 17, 1904

<sup>3</sup>W. E. M. Brown, The Polished Shaft, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup>Cole, Herveiana, Letters of Hervey, p. 6.

<sup>5</sup>Ryland, The Character of the Rev. James Hervey, p. 147.



other pupils to progress faster than his own son, who was not exceptionally bright.

By the time Hervey was seventeen he had grown so tall that he was embarrassed to continue as a grammar school pupil, so his father obtained for him a small grant of 20 L. per year at Lincoln College, Oxford.<sup>1</sup> In 1731 he entered the university under the tutelage of the rector of the college. Here he remained for five years before receiving his B.A. He largely wasted the first two years, later attributing this as much to lack of guidance from his tutor as to his own indolence.

In 1733 he came under the influence of the Oxford Methodists, John Wesley's "Holy Club," with whose aims and activities he was one in spirit. The members<sup>2</sup> of this little group were Church of England ritualists. They met together several times each week for prayer, study, and religious conversation. They observed the fast days of the church and adopted the rare practice of receiving the Communion weekly. Most of them devoted an hour every day to acts of charity: visited and aided the prisoners and the sick, read to the illiterate, and gave what money they could spare to the poor. In addition, they carried on a vigorous campaign to

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>The original members of the group in 1730 were John and Charles Wesley, William Morgan, and Robert Kirkham. John Gambold, John Clayton, Benjamin Ingham, Thomas Broughton, and Wesley Hall all joined before Hervey. Later, John Kinchin, John Whitelamb, Richard Hutchins, and George Whitefield were added to the group.

encourage and instruct their acquaintances in the practice of the Christian life.<sup>1</sup>

The religious zeal of these young men won for them the ridicule of their fellow students. They were dubbed with such uncomplimentary titles as "Bible-bigots," "Bible-moths," "methodists," and "the Holy Club." Their notoriety extended even beyond the bounds of the university. In London Fog's Weekly Journal printed a letter from a correspondent at Oxford who accused the "Methodists" of "superstitious Customs" and claimed that "they have the Misfortune to be taken by all, who have ever been in their Company, for Madmen, and those whom the world is pleas'd to distinguish, by the Title of Fools."<sup>2</sup> In later years Hervey himself is said to have referred to this period of his life as "the days of his self-righteousness,"<sup>3</sup> but at the time he was in full agreement with the emphasis upon salvation by works. To his sister he wrote: "What sweet complacency, what unspeakable satisfaction shall we reap from the contemplation of an uninterrupted series of spotless actions!"<sup>4</sup>

In his new environment he began to show more concern for his studies. At John Wesley's urging he commenced the study of

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<sup>1</sup>Letter of John Wesley to Richard Morgan in The Journal of John Wesley, I:87ff. Also Whitefield's Journals, p. 38

<sup>2</sup>No. 214, December 9th, 1732.

<sup>3</sup>John Brown, Memoirs of the Life and Character of the Late Rev. James Hervey, p. 56.

<sup>4</sup>Letter No. 1, General Collection of Letters in Works, Vols. V and VI. (Hereafter referred to as Gen. Col.)

Hebrew with no other help than that of a Westminster grammar.<sup>1</sup> The measure of his success was indicated by his usual custom in later life of reading from the unpointed text at family devotions. Through the study of literature, especially Joseph Spence's Essay on Mr. Pope's Odyssey in Four Dialogues, he cultivated a style, and his reading in science and natural theology awakened in him the interest in nature that was to contribute so largely to his popularity as an author. After he had decided to go into orders, he appears to have given some special attention to his preparation for the ministry. In a letter to his father he said: "I shd be glad if you wd make me a present of Chrysostom's & Gregorie's De Sacerdotio."<sup>2</sup> This was a volume of more than 600 pages in Latin and Greek and not easy reading.

At last, in 1736 he received his degree. Although his father wanted him to take a curacy near the university in order to retain the exhibition at Lincoln College, Hervey thought it unfair to deprive someone else who might need the money more than he did. He chose to return to Hardingstone and serve as curate to his father at Collingtree.<sup>3</sup>

On September 19th he was ordained a deacon of the Church of England by the Bishop of Oxford.<sup>4</sup> Three months later his

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<sup>1</sup>Cole, op. cit., Part I, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup>Box of loose papers and clippings labeled "Weston" in the Northampton Public Library.

<sup>3</sup>Cole, op. cit., Part I, p. 9.

<sup>4</sup>Hervey, Letters, Elegant, Interesting, and Evangelical, p. 98.

grandfather died, and his father succeeded to the living of Weston Favell. It seems strange that Hervey's services were not required more than ever at this time by his father. Almost immediately, however, he went down to Hampshire as curate to John Kinchin, another of the Oxford Methodists. Kinchin, upon leaving the university, had been presented with the living of Dummer, but he was negotiating for a deanship at Oxford, and in order to be near the university had changed places with George Whitefield. When Whitefield decided to leave on his mission to America, it was arranged for Hervey to replace him.<sup>1</sup>

A few weeks after his departure for Dummer the residents of Collingtree invited him to return and become their resident pastor. He replied in a lengthy letter expressing doubt that he was the "careful clergyman" whom they desired and laying before them his comprehensive views as to the kind of man they should seek. He did not actually refuse their offer, but neither did he indicate that he might accept it.<sup>2</sup> Nothing more seems to have come of this exchange, although it may have influenced him in his decision some years later to return again to Weston Favell as his father's curate.

During his year at Dummer Hervey began to show signs of consumption.<sup>3</sup> In the hope that a change of climate might help,

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<sup>1</sup>Whitefield's Journals, p. 72.

<sup>2</sup>Gen. Col. Let. 7.

<sup>3</sup>Tyerman, The Oxford Methodists, p. 214.



his friends arranged for him to go to Stoke Abbey on the North Devonshire coast as chaplain and companion to another Oxford graduate, Paul Orchard. There he remained for more than two years.

His health must have shown some improvement, for on December 23, 1739, he was ordained a priest at Exeter<sup>1</sup> and soon after accepted the curacy of Bideford, not far from Stoke Abbey. Early in 1741 the rector of Bideford died,<sup>2</sup> leaving Hervey to administer the parish alone for nearly two years.<sup>3</sup> He was so well liked that his parishioners raised his annual stipend from 40 L. to 60 L. by voluntary contribution.

It was at Bideford that he first began to write and preach in an evangelical strain. Exactly how this change came about is not very clear. He had no sudden conversion like the Wesleys. Quite likely his contact with some of the Evangelicals in Cornwall had something to do with it, but not even Hervey himself was certain what had caused the change. "Indeed Sir," he wrote to Whitefield in 1739,

I cannot precisely tell; the light was not instantaneous, but gradual. It did not flash upon my soul, but arose like the dawning day. A little book wrote by Jenks upon Submission to the Righteousness of God was made serviceable to me. Your Journals, dear Sir, and Sermons, especially

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 212. Also see Hervey, Letters, Elegant, Interesting, and Evangelical, pp. 104f.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 228.

<sup>3</sup>Cole, op. cit., Part I, p. 43.



that sweet Sermon upon "What think ye of Christ?" were a means of bringing me to a Knowledge of the truth, and another excellent piece has been, and I hope will be as so much eye-salve to my dim and clouded understanding, I mean "Marshall's Gospel Mystery of Sanctification."<sup>1</sup>

In 1741 he preached his two sermons entitled "Many Made Righteous by the Obedience of One,"<sup>2</sup> known at Bideford as his Recantation Sermons,<sup>3</sup> and his letters for the same year reveal that the emphasis upon salvation by works had given way to a new interest in justification by Christ's righteousness alone.

At Bideford he also began his literary career. Parts of his "Meditations Among the Tombs" and "Reflections on a Flower Garden" were written while he was still in the West.

Upon the institution of the new rector in March, 1742,<sup>4</sup> Hervey was dismissed as curate. The parishioners held him in such high esteem that they offered to maintain him at their own expense, but the rector, undoubtedly disturbed more by Hervey's evangelical tenets than by the expense involved, could not be swayed. There was no choice but to leave, so Hervey returned once again to serve as his father's curate. To a man of his sensitivity this was undoubtedly a trying experience.

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<sup>1</sup>Hervey, A Selection of Valuable Religious Letters, Partly Original, Let. 74.

<sup>2</sup>See Works, V:274ff.

<sup>3</sup>John Brown, op. cit., p. 141.

<sup>4</sup>Charles Hole in The Bideford Gazette, February 24, 1903.

Back among his former friends he gave himself wholeheartedly to his parish duties and literary efforts. In 1746 his first book, Meditations Among the Tombs, was published. It contained the two essays mentioned above, both composed of florid descriptive writing interwoven with evangelical discourse. Its bombastic style is more repulsive than attractive today, but it caught the popular fancy of the times. Hervey was so encouraged by its success that he immediately began work on a companion volume, which was published as part of the second edition in 1748. This second volume contained two more pieces of a similar character to those in the first.<sup>1</sup> The two-volume set was entitled Meditations and Contemplations and was destined to go into more than twenty-five editions before the turn of the century.

Yet all was not easy going for Hervey. In 1747 the consumption began to attack him with renewed vigor. In August he wrote:

My health is continually upon the decline, and the springs of life are all relaxing. Mine age is departing, and removing me as a shepherd's tent. Medicine is baffled; and my Physician, Dr. Stonhouse, who is a dear friend to his patient, and a lover of the Lord Jesus Christ, pities, but cannot succour me.<sup>2</sup>

He recovered somewhat from this attack but a year later had a relapse and was confined to his home for six weeks. "I have not been capable of preaching for several Sundays," he said.

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<sup>1</sup>These were called "Contemplations on the Night" and "Contemplations on the Starry Heavens."

<sup>2</sup>Gen. Col. Let. 40.

"Pymont water, asses' milk, and such kind of restoratives, I try, but try in vain."<sup>1</sup>

By 1750 his health had declined to the point where his family and friends were greatly concerned about him. In the hope that a change of environment might benefit him, Whitefield, Stonhouse, and another friend, the Rev. Mr. Hartley of Winwick, pressed him into accompanying Whitefield up to London. The trip was so sudden that Hervey's parents did not know of it in advance, and Stonhouse had to loan Hervey 5 L. for expenses.<sup>2</sup>

For nearly two years Hervey remained in London. One winter he stayed with the Whitefields in Tottenham Court Road,<sup>3</sup> but the rest of the time he lived with his brother William, either in Miles Lane or at the country house at Tottenham. The improvement for which his friends had hoped was not forthcoming. In 1751 he was confined by such a severe attack of his old malady that he thought his end was near.<sup>4</sup>

His weak condition no doubt explains why he seems to have taken little part in any kind of public ministry while in London; still, he was not idle. He revised the Meditations and Contemplations, produced a small pamphlet upon Lord Bolingbroke's Letters on the Study and Use of History, and worked on his

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<sup>1</sup>Gen. Col. Let. 55.

<sup>2</sup>Hervey, Original Letters of the Rev. James Hervey, pp. 20-2.

<sup>3</sup>John Brown, op. cit., p. 152

<sup>4</sup>Gen. Col. Let. 95.

principal treatise, Theron and Aspasio.<sup>1</sup> He also carried on an extensive correspondence, mainly with his evangelical friends, and served as secretary to his brother, a wine merchant.<sup>2</sup>

Before going to London he had begun a correspondence with the Countess of Huntingdon<sup>3</sup> at her request. Through her he became acquainted with the Earl of Dartmouth, the Countess Delitz, Lady Chesterfield, Lady Frances Shirley, Lady Gertrude Hotham, and many others of the nobility who were taking an active interest in the Evangelical Revival. At the homes of Lady Frances and Lady Gertrude he occasionally preached to a select audience,<sup>4</sup> and with Lady Frances began a long correspondence which lasted until his death.<sup>5</sup>

He also had the opportunity of extending his acquaintance among the evangelical clergy of both the Church of England and the dissenters. Because of his Meditations they looked upon him as a staunch ally, and he formed an intimate friendship with such men as William Romaine, Dr. John Gill, and John Cennick.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Cole, op. cit., Letters of Hervey, p. 50

<sup>2</sup>Hervey, Original Letters of the Rev. James Hervey, p. 41.

<sup>3</sup>The Life and Times of Selina Countess of Huntingdon, I:123. The Countess, through her "connection," was mainly responsible for introducing the Evangelical Revival into the aristocratic circles.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid. I:160f.

<sup>5</sup>One hundred and eighteen of Hervey's letters were subsequently published by her executors and constitute an important source of information about him.

<sup>6</sup>The Life and Times of Selina Countess of Huntingdon, I:162.



It is interesting to note that at one point while in London, he was offered an opportunity of going abroad as tutor to one of the important families of Jamaica. He was to receive 100 L. per year and maintenance, with promise of a rapid increase to 150 L. if the arrangement proved satisfactory.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, his health was in no condition to warrant a serious consideration of the offer.

Early in May, 1752, Hervey's father died, and he at once set out for Weston Favell. That he was in no physical condition to assume the role of a parish rector is apparent from a letter that he wrote to Lady Frances Shirley shortly after his arrival. "My strength is so worn down," he said, "and my Constitution so irreparably decayed, that it will be absolutely impossible for me to discharge my ministerial Duty."<sup>2</sup> In spite of his infirmities, however, he plunged into his work with what zeal he could muster and carried on valiantly until his death.

He scrupled to become a pluralist, as his father had been, and wanted to sell the living of Collingtree.<sup>3</sup> His brother's opposition to the plan, however, induced him to give it up.<sup>4</sup> Under pressure from his family and friends he finally agreed to

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<sup>1</sup>Hervey, Original Letters of the Rev. James Hervey, p. 43.

<sup>2</sup>Hervey, Letters to Lady Frances Shirley, Let. 30.

<sup>3</sup>Letter to brother (undated), bound volume of MS letters of Hervey in the Beattie Collection of the Northampton Public Library.

<sup>4</sup>Letter to brother (June 21, 1752), Beattie Collection.



accept the second living. He had a mother and sister to support; he was in a precarious state of health and seemed to be growing steadily worse, so that it was quite apparent that he would have to employ a curate. In these circumstances the extra income from the living of Collingtree would be very welcome.

To be a pluralist was an involved and expensive procedure. The first prerequisite was an M.A. degree, which he took at Clare Hall, Cambridge. Then it was necessary for him to make a trip to London to obtain a dispensation from the Archbishop and seals from the Lord Chancellor.<sup>1</sup> Finally, he went to Peterborough and received institution from his bishop.<sup>2</sup> The fees on the various certificates alone cost Hervey about 120 L.<sup>3</sup> Considering that the combined livings only totaled 180 L. per year,<sup>4</sup> it must have been some time before the living of Collingtree repaid him its cost.

He took as curate Moses Browne, whose Sunday Thoughts had convinced him that here was a kindred spirit. The two pastors alternated between Weston Favell and Collingtree until Hervey's health deteriorated to such an extent that he could no longer hazard the journeys to his second parish.<sup>5</sup> At Weston Favell he

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<sup>1</sup>Letters to Lady F. Shirley, Let. 33.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., Let. 38.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., Let. 34.

<sup>4</sup>Burlington et al., The Modern Universal British Traveller, p. 202.

<sup>5</sup>Hervey, A Collection of the Letters of James Hervey, Life of Hervey, I:xxvi n.

increased his burden by instituting a Wednesday evening lecture-sermon in addition to the regular Sunday services.<sup>1</sup>

In November, following his return from London, his literary efforts again bore fruit in the publication of his Remarks on Lord Bolingbroke's Letters on the Study and Use of History.<sup>2</sup> Originally these remarks were not intended for publication but were written as a private letter.<sup>3</sup> Bolingbroke had alleged that the Old Testament was "no sufficient foundation for chronology from the beginning for time."<sup>4</sup> Lady Frances Shirley had requested Hervey's opinion, and he attempted to refute Bolingbroke and vindicate the doctrine of verbal inerrancy.<sup>5</sup> She and her friends liked his answer so much that they encouraged him to publish it. After much prayer to God for direction Hervey concluded that "it was his will that it should be published."<sup>6</sup>

After several years in preparation Theron and Aspasio made its appearance in 1755. This three-volume work reflected strongly his moderate Calvinism and set forth in dialogue form his favorite doctrine of justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ. It was written in a style similar to that of

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<sup>1</sup>Gen. Col. Let. 115.

<sup>2</sup>Hervey, op. cit., Life of Hervey, I:ix.

<sup>3</sup>Gen. Col. Let. 112.

<sup>4</sup>Hervey, Works, V:155

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., V:154ff.

<sup>6</sup>Gen. Col. Let. 112.

the Meditations and Contemplations and met with favorable and extended acclaim, especially from the Evangelicals.

Theron and Aspasio also occasioned considerable opposition. The doctrine of imputed righteousness was attacked by Hervey's former spiritual father, John Wesley. Robert Sandeman in Scotland wrote two volumes criticizing its doctrine of faith. William Cudworth, David Wilson, and other Evangelicals and dissenters hurried to Hervey's defense, while the opposing ranks were, likewise, not without volunteers. This controversy will be discussed in detail in succeeding chapters. Suffice it to say here that it convinced Hervey that in order to clear himself of the charge of antinomianism hurled by his opponents, it would be most desirable for him to add a volume on "holiness" to Theron and Aspasio.<sup>1</sup> This had been part of his initial design but was not included in the first edition. Because of his rapid decline in health, he was never able to complete it.

Hervey also wrote recommendations for certain works of other evangelical authors, including Walter Marshall, Benjamin Jenks, Richard Burnham,<sup>2</sup> and Robert Trail.<sup>3</sup> Marshall's Gospel Mystery of Sanctification and Jenks' Meditations deserve special mention

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<sup>1</sup>Gen. Col. Let. 138

<sup>2</sup>Pious Memorials, published in 1753 with Hervey's recommendation (see DNB), q. v. in Hervey's Works, V:233.

<sup>3</sup>Trail, Works, 4 vols., Edin: 1745 (listed in DNB). See Hervey's letter (July 8, 1755) in Hervey's Works, V:241.

because of the importance they held for him. "These are with me the two fundamental books," he said. "These teach vital religion."<sup>1</sup>

Marshall's book he placed "next to the holy word of God."<sup>2</sup> When informed of the intention of the publishers to reissue it and preface what he had said in its favor in Theron and Aspasio,<sup>3</sup> he wrote them a letter enlarging upon his recommendation. By his own declaration this book might be considered as a proper substitute for the fourth volume which he was never able to add to Theron and Aspasio.<sup>4</sup>

In his preface to a new edition of Jenks's work he lauded these meditations "as so many striking sermons on the most interesting subjects of our holy religion; or rather, as a judicious abridgment of various excellent sermons, on almost every branch of Christianity," and added:

If, in some few sentences, we meet with an obsolete expression or inelegant phrase, methinks it is only like a hair adhering to a fine suit of velvet, or like a mote dropped upon a globe of crystal.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Gen. Col. Let. 209.

<sup>2</sup>Gen. Col. Let. 162

<sup>3</sup>Theron and Aspasio, 3rd edition, III:336n.

<sup>4</sup>Marshall, Gospel Mystery of Sanctification, p. xiv. Hervey's letter of recommendation is dated November 5, 1756.

<sup>5</sup>Works, VI:454f.



The reviewers were not so impressed. The Critical Review called the book "ridiculous and enthusiastic" and submitted that it would have been a better characterization if Hervey had said:

In almost every sentence we meet with, some absolute [sic] expression or inelegant phrase, which methinks, are like hairs on the greasy coat of a groom or like dishwater thrown into a kennel.<sup>1</sup>

Hervey was too sensitive to allow this caustic comment to pass unnoticed and determined to vindicate Jenks (and himself). He began to prepare a satirical reply, which he proposed to call Ned Dry's Apology for the Critical Reviewers.<sup>2</sup> He was shrewd enough to see that his only hope of success lay in a retaliation in kind, but he had a decidedly limited sense of humor and almost no understanding of satire. In accord with the recommendation of nearly all of his friends who read the manuscript he decided not to publish it.<sup>3</sup>

During the last two or three years of his life Hervey was not able to conduct services at Collingtree or visit his parishioners there.<sup>4</sup> He could barely fulfill his preaching engagements at Weston Favell. Late in 1747 he was severely

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<sup>1</sup>The Critical Review 2:431 (1756).

<sup>2</sup>Hervey, Letters to Ryland, Let. 44.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., Lets. 45 and 58.

<sup>4</sup>Cole, op. cit., Part I., p. 100.



stricken and apparently never went to his church again,<sup>1</sup> the burden of his work being taken over by a new curate.<sup>2</sup> Yet infirm as he was, he did not give up easily. Although too weak to leave his home and much of the time in pain, he carried on his controversy with Wesley right up to the day of his death. Throughout his last year he was also engaged in supervising the rebuilding of the rectory, which had reached a ruinous state.<sup>3</sup> The project was made disagreeable by constant trouble with the builder and complicated by the necessity of renting the rectory land to meet the costs of construction. In spite of these difficulties the new house was a credit to his care of the parish, for it still stands today in excellent condition and in pleasant harmony with the church and surrounding buildings.

Hervey did not live to see the house completed. In October his condition became critical. More prophetically than he then realized, he wrote: "I am now so very ill that I scarce think I shall live to see the approaching Christmas."<sup>4</sup> After evening prayers on the first Sunday of December he collapsed, and only with considerable difficulty did the family get him upstairs to his room.<sup>5</sup> On Christmas day, after repeating over and over

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<sup>1</sup>Gen. Col. Let. 196. Also Letters to Lady F. Shirley, Let. 115.

<sup>2</sup>Letters to Ryland, Let. 36.

<sup>3</sup>Cole, op. cit., Part II, p. 17.

<sup>4</sup>Gen. Col. Let. 206.

<sup>5</sup>Cole, op. cit., Part I, p. 82.

the words "Precious salvation!" he died. By his own wish his body was carried to the grave covered with the poor's pall, and he was buried under the Communion table of the Weston Favell church on December 28, 1758.

In paying tribute to Hervey the Northampton Mercury acknowledged that

in his ministerial province he was pious, fervent, and indefatigable. -- In his ordinary connections with the community, he was ever chearful, conscientiously punctual in all his dealings, and amiably candid to persons of every denomination.<sup>1</sup>

Although he always remained steady in his attachment to the Established Church, he had a "right hand of fellowship, and a heart of love, ever ready, ever open, for all the upright evangelical dissenters."<sup>2</sup> The Baptist minister, John Ryland of Warwick, was one of his most intimate friends. Others included Isaac Watts and Philip Doddridge, both distinguished dissenters of his day. Watts's hymns had a regular place in Hervey's services. Doddridge had already established a center of evangelical thought and work at Northampton, and close contact seems to have been maintained between this and similar centers in Bristol, London, Hertfordshire, Cornwall, and even remote parts of Scotland.<sup>3</sup> It was most propitious for Hervey that he was able to live so near this evangelical crossroads.

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Works, I:xli.

<sup>2</sup>Gen. Col. Let. 55.

<sup>3</sup>W. E. M. Brown, op. cit., p. 28.

Some of his dissenter friends wondered how he could remain in a church which to them seemed so imperfect, but he replied:

I had not the forming of the Constitution of the Church of England: I had not the establishing and instituting of the modes of worship; Divine Providence brought me forth in the Church; I am in great weakness of constitution, and have no health and spirits to make any great exertions; if I was to omit reading the prayers, they would suspend me; if they did, I would come amongst you, for I love you dearly. With respect to the errors and blemishes of the Church of England, as I was not the author of them, so I can neither correct or remove them. In truth, I strive never to think of them, but to fix all my attention on the person of our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup>

He would, nevertheless, have had a minimum of contact with the greater number of the clergy of his church, for they were Arminian and Latitudinarian and would have looked upon him with some disdain as one of those odd creatures called "methodists." Actually, he was a "methodist" only in the widest sense of the word. More properly, he should be termed an Evangelical. Before Lady Huntingdon's open break with the Establishment it was sometimes difficult to distinguish the Evangelicals from the Calvinistic Methodists, but Hervey's staunch loyalty to the Church never left any doubt as to which group he belonged.

In his small country parish he found time for a considerable amount of studying and writing. He was, indeed, more fortunate in this respect than most of the English clergy. The ordinary clergyman had little leisure for such activities. He either was overworked trying to fill a crowded schedule or else found it necessary to earn his living by adding some menial

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Ryland, op. cit., p. 282.

occupation to his parish duties.<sup>1</sup> Hervey's infirmities prohibited him from undertaking the former of these alternatives, while his income was, fortunately, sufficient to make the latter unnecessary.

During the earlier years of his ministry he read widely in Christian biography and the classics as well as in science and theology. Virgil was a favorite.<sup>2</sup> But as time passed he became increasingly less concerned with extensive reading and confined his study more and more to the Bible. Three years before his death he commented:

My Thirst after Books is very much allayed; I have bid adieu to the curious and entertaining Inventions of Wit or Discoveries of Science; My principal Attention is now devoted to the sacred Oracles of Inspiration.<sup>3</sup>

His Bible even replaced the Spectator at his breakfast table. While at Bideford he had written: "We read one or more of those elegant and instructive papers every morning at breakfast. ... We reckon our repast imperfect, without a little of Mr. Addison's or Mr. Steele's company."<sup>4</sup> In a letter of 1755, however, he said "Our method is, every morning at nine, when we breakfast, to read

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<sup>1</sup>Draper, William Mason: A Study in Eighteenth Century Culture, p. 13.

<sup>2</sup>Gen Col. Let. 30.

<sup>3</sup>Letters to Lady F. Shirley, Let. 76.

<sup>4</sup>Gen. Col. Let. 16.



a verse or two from the Bible, and make it the subject of our conversation."<sup>1</sup>

In addition to his parish work, his studies, and his writing, Hervey carried on a fairly large correspondence, mainly with those of similar evangelical views. He consulted many of them about various passages of scripture and bound their replies into a special volume, which he greatly prized as an aid to his studies.<sup>2</sup> Among his correspondents were evangelical members of the Church of England, several dissenting ministers, and also clergy of the Church of Scotland and the Scottish Secession Church.<sup>3</sup>

An unusual and interesting feature of his correspondence was his custom of writing anonymous letters of warning to those whose spiritual condition seemed to him perilous. One of these letters was written to "Beau" Nash, acknowledged king of the fashionable gentlemen of Bath, where Hervey made a brief stay. It warned (in part):

I take my pen, to advise--to admonish--nay--to request of you to repent, while you have opportunity, if haply you may find grace and forgiveness: yet a moment and you may die; yet a little while, and you must die; and will you go down with infamy and despair to the grave, rather than depart in peace, and with hopes full of immortality?

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<sup>1</sup>Gen. Col. Let. 142.

<sup>2</sup>John Brown, op. cit., p. 47.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 222.

But I must tell you plainly, Sir, with the utmost freedom, that your present behaviour is not the way to reconcile yourself to God: you are so far from making atonement to offended justice, that you are aggravating the former account and heaping up an increase of wath against the day of wrath.<sup>1</sup>

Another interesting example of his written criticisms is a letter (obviously not anonymous)<sup>2</sup> to one of his close friends at Northampton. It begins:

Coming home this evening, I could not forbear musing on the various topics, which furnished matter for our discourse ... Was it you, dear Sir, or I, that when a certain passage in scripture happened to be mentioned, treated it, not indeed with a contemptuous disdain, but with too ludicrous an air? descanted on it, in a sportive and frolicsome manner, in order to create a little pleasantry. If I was the person that indulged this improper levity, I beseech you to rebuke me, and severely too. Though my design might be innocent, my conduct was apparently wrong.<sup>3</sup>

Hervey attained some fame as a preacher, and many were said to have come from considerable distances to hear him. One man was reputed to have travelled regularly eleven miles on foot to attend the services.<sup>4</sup> Several people were also reported to have started on Saturday night from the village of Husbands Bosworth, about thirty miles from Weston Favell, and travelled by the light of their lanterns and candles.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Works, v:247. This letter was found among Nash's effects after his death. It is generally attributed to Hervey. The style certainly reads like Hervey's, and the date of writing coincides with his stay in Bath.

<sup>2</sup>But the recipient is not known. Unfortunately, the names of his correspondents have been obliterated from his published letters in accord with eighteenth century practice.

<sup>3</sup>Gen. Col. Let. 37. <sup>4</sup>John Brown, op. cit., preface, p. iv.

<sup>5</sup>Cole, op. cit., Part III, p. 11.

His services were conducted according to the liturgy of the Church of England, with the exception previously noted: the substitution of Watts's hymns for the approved hymn book.<sup>1</sup> His sermons were thoroughly evangelical and extremely earnest and pleading. In style they bore little resemblance to his books, for there was none of the florid and unnatural language--only plain and straightforward appeals.

Few of his sermons have been preserved because he wrote them out only on special occasions. During the early years of his ministry when he was at Dummer, Bideford, and Collingtree, he used shorthand notes in the pulpit, but after settling at Weston Favell he began preaching without notes.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, some of his sermons must have been almost completely extemporaneous, for in one letter he remarked: "Sunday morning is come, and I have not even thought of a text to preach on."<sup>3</sup>

In a letter to Hervey's biographer, Dr. Stonhouse recalled: that he preached without notes, excepting that he had before him a small leaf of paper, on which were written, in shorthand, the general heads and particulars of his sermon, which sometimes he looked at and sometimes not. He was very regular in his plans; nor was he very long; from thirty to forty minutes was his usual time, rarely longer.<sup>4</sup> Brown, in his Memoirs of Hervey, quotes from a letter he had

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<sup>1</sup>John Brown, op. cit., p. 160.

<sup>2</sup>Letters to Lady F. Shirley, Let. 93.

<sup>3</sup>Quoted in Cole, op. cit., Part I, p. 111.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 110.

received from Dr. Haweis, who had attended a service at Weston Favell. Haweis said of Hervey:

I found him tall, much emaciated; with serenity of countenance, and cordial welcome. ... His preaching was purely evangelical, and very similar to his writings, in beautiful comments on the Scriptures he quoted; but his manner of delivery far from the elegance I expected in the tone of voice and action ...<sup>1</sup>

It is difficult to form an accurate picture of the size of Hervey's congregations, for the evidence conflicts. Cole mentions a report common at Northampton several years after Hervey's death that during his last years the churchyard was half filled with people anxious to hear him preach. Chairs were carried from adjacent cottages and placed by the windows so that more might be accommodated.<sup>2</sup> Haweis, however, is quoted as saying that on the day of his visit the church was, "though full, not remarkably crowded, but the people were attentive to hear him ..."<sup>3</sup>

No doubt it is to be expected that some of the estimates of the number in Hervey's congregations became exaggerated with the passing of time; nevertheless, there must have been some truth to them. In a letter of October, 1753, Hervey himself remarked: "I have this afternoon been preaching to a crowded audience--"<sup>4</sup> Another letter (undated, but from its content apparently late) mentions a service when "the church was so

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<sup>1</sup>p. 122.

<sup>2</sup>op. cit., Part II, p. 62.

<sup>3</sup>John Brown, loc. cit.

<sup>4</sup>Gen. Col. Let. 115.



thronged, that it was not practicable to shut the door."<sup>1</sup> It must not be supposed, however, that he attracted throngs in any sense comparable to the thousands to which his friends Wesley and Whitefield preached. The Weston Favell church is exceptionally small<sup>2</sup> and even when completely full could not hold more than a few score people.

It appears that his congregations were largely rural. "The poor country people love me tenderly," he wrote, "and therefore bear with my infirmities; else I should no longer attempt to preach, even before them."<sup>3</sup> His ministry to the parish of Weston Favell itself was not greatly successful, for he seems to have had little contact with most of his parishioners in the village itself. When he first came, some of them even locked up their pews and would not allow anyone else to use them,<sup>4</sup> so opposed were they to his "methodist enthusiasm."

In an article in the Northampton Mercury in 1906 the Rev. G. B. Saul estimates that "Hervey's ministry failed to leave any deep or lasting impression" and quotes a Moravian minister, Francis Oakley, whose parish adjoined Hervey's, as saying: "Neither do I find there are any considerable traces of Hervey's

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<sup>1</sup>Thid., Let. 146

<sup>2</sup>The nave measures only 42 feet by 22 feet.

<sup>3</sup>Gen. Col. Let. 181.

<sup>4</sup>John Brown, op. cit., p. 154.

<sup>5</sup>Letter to Rev. Mr. Barlow, quoted in John Brown, op. cit., p. 411.

labours to be met with in the parish of Weston Favell."<sup>1</sup> The same testimony is found in a 1778 letter of John Newton, who wrote:

I believe there has not been a gospel sermon preached at Weston-Favell since Mr. Hervey's death, except by his curate Moses Brown; nor can I hear that there is one spiritual person in the parish. His other parish of Collingtree is likewise now a dark place, though there may be a half a dozen of people there who know something of the Lord. I preached twice a year at Collingtree for about ten years, but I am now quite shut out. Mr. Hervey's usefulness was chiefly in his writings; a few people in his neighborhood profited by him, who, since his death, joined the dissenters; but he never knew that one soul was awakened in the parish where he lived, though he was, in every respect, one of the greatest preachers of the age; as plain in his pulpit-service as he is elegant in his writings. The Lord showed in him, that the work is all his own, and that the best instrument can do no more than he appoints. His temper was heavenly, his conversation always spiritual and instructive, yet he could make no impression on them living or dying.<sup>2</sup>

From the scanty evidence available it would seem correct to conclude that Hervey's evangelical teachings had little permanent effect on his congregation or in his parish. So far as his work lived after him at all then, it did so through his writings and not through his parish ministry.

Hervey's letters and works reveal a remarkable and complex personality in which five prominent characteristics may be discerned: a humble piety, a marked generosity, a singleminded interest in Christ, a half-suppressed admiration for social position and cultural refinement, and a rare appreciation of the beauties of

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<sup>1</sup>December 7, 1906

<sup>2</sup>Letter to Rev. Mr. Barlass, quoted in John Brown, op. cit., p. 411.

nature. To find such a combination of qualities in any man would be unusual; that they were possessed by an eighteenth-century English clergyman was indeed unique. A consideration of each of these traits in turn may contribute to a better understanding of the author of Theron and Aspasio.

Hervey fairly breathed piety. His critics, fearful lest his doctrine of imputed righteousness would betray many into antinomian licentiousness, would no doubt have welcomed any opportunity of exposing such tendencies in his own life. He gave them no such opening. The testimony to his holiness is universal. Although it was not intended as a compliment, even the moderate clergy of his church referred to him as "Saint James."<sup>1</sup>

He was ever zealous to make the most of any opportunity to promote growth in the Christian life, whether in himself or in others. A member of an Assembly for Christian Improvement at Northampton, he attended faithfully as long as he was able to ride to the meetings.<sup>2</sup> The chief purpose of this assembly was the mutual improvement of its members in Scriptural knowledge, and no one was admitted who did not understand Greek.<sup>3</sup> In order to

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<sup>1</sup>John Brown, op. cit., p. 169.

<sup>2</sup>Works, I:xxxiii.

<sup>3</sup>Gen. Col. Let. 132.

prevent any "sinister reflections from the inconsiderate" the rules provided that the assembly should be secret.<sup>1</sup> Strangely enough, it met in different inns agreed upon, and in order that public prayer might not alarm the other customers, Hervey drew up two forms of prayer to be used by the members at home before and after the meetings.<sup>2</sup>

It is not surprising that he was allotted the task of writing the prayers, for he attached the greatest importance to prayer and spent much time in his closet. "I think," he wrote to a friend, " ... that we are extremely mistaken, and sustain a mighty loss in our most important interests, by reading so much, and praying so little."<sup>3</sup> Frequently, he poured out his heart to God with considerable feeling. One night, long after the family had gone to bed, Hervey's groans awakened his servant, who rushed down to the room, expecting to find his master in great pain. Instead, to the servant's surprise, he was lying prostrate on the floor, engaged in fervent supplication and weeping in bitter remorse.<sup>4</sup>

He held family devotions morning, afternoon, and evening. In the evening his two servants read from the New Testament and Psalms; Hervey then chose the passage that most struck him and

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<sup>1</sup>Works, V:250f.

<sup>2</sup>See Works, V:254f.

<sup>3</sup>Gen. Col. Let. 40.

<sup>4</sup>John Brown, op. cit., p. 316.



gave an exhortation upon it.<sup>1</sup> John Ryland, who was present at many of these gatherings, remarked that these discourses "were some of the best divinity lectures that ever were given to young students."<sup>2</sup> In the morning the servants were examined upon the previous evening's lesson to make certain that they understood it. At teatime he would take his Hebrew Bible or Greek Testament down with him and speak on some passage. His friend Romaine observed "that this was generally an improving season. The Glory of God is very seldom promoted at the tea-table, but it was at Mr. Hervey's."<sup>3</sup>

Hervey was exceptionally humble and gentle and was never known to have been in a passion. In spite of the saintliness of his character he always emphasized that he was a sinful and unprofitable servant. Although his learning and ability were considerable, he always held that this was not so. Typical is his warning to a new correspondent:

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<sup>1</sup>Works, V:140. Romaine's Funeral Sermon.

<sup>2</sup>Ryland, op. cit., p. 6. Ryland's comments must be accepted with caution. Tyerman was kind to him in saying that his biography of Hervey was "far from satisfactory." (The Oxford Methodists, p. iii.) Miss Brown has recently given a more satisfactory evaluation when she said that his praises "rose beyond the limits even of sanity." (The Polished Shaft, p. 24.) Here is an example of Ryland's effusions: "James Hervey, in this life, for twenty-six years, stood nearer to God's heart than millions of angels ..." (p. 17.)

<sup>3</sup>Works, V:140. Romaine's Funeral Sermon.

Your friendship, dear Sir, I accept as a privilege, and shall cultivate with delight. Only I must, in common justice, forewarn you of one particular: That your social intercourses with James Hervey, will be an exercise of charity, rather than an advantageous traffic to yourself.<sup>1</sup>

He burned all the letters that he received which contained only compliments, preserving only those which dealt with religious matters.<sup>2</sup>

His humility was all the more remarkable because he also possessed an unmistakable streak of vanity and a very sensitive nature. To some extent he was aware of both. His vanity had been a source of irritation to him from his early years. While at Oxford he wrote to his sister apologizing for his failure to send some original verses to her:

I perceive such an attempt will be either very absurd or very dangerous. For should I tack together a few doggerel rhymes, this would be an affront to you; whereas, should I succeed so well as to gain the applause of my readers, this I am sure would portend very great harm, if not to you, yet most certainly to me.<sup>3</sup>

How easily praise affected and upset him can be seen from the following excerpt from a letter to one of his close friends:

Fy, fy upon you dear Dr. ----, I had been endeavouring all day long to fix my admiration on that most exalted, that most amiable Being, who, though possessed of excellencies which the very angels contemplate with rapture and adoration, yet humbled himself to death, the

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<sup>1</sup>Gen. Col. Let. 106.

<sup>2</sup>Hervey's Letters to Cudworth, in Cudworth, Defense of Theron and Aspasio, p. 36.

<sup>3</sup>Gen. Col. Let. 3.

death of the cross, for my friend and me; when your praises, kind indeed, but, alas! perniciously kind, fetched my thoughts from their proper element, and proper object, to grovel on a creature; and that the meanest of creatures, self.<sup>1</sup>

In general, however, he succeeded so well in subjecting his vanity to his humility that there was usually a touch of humor in those rare instances where the former asserted itself. The most interesting example of this was an incident concerning his portrait, painted by Williams. A mezzotinto engraving was published in 1752, and his friend, the Rev. Mr. Nixon, Rector of Cold Higham,<sup>2</sup> wrote some highly laudatory verses to be printed beneath his likeness. Hervey declined, saying that "this practice, though once customary, is now, I believe, seldom used; and for me to revive it, when it does me such distinguished credit, would be too vain-glorious ..."<sup>3</sup> His biographers have used this story as an illustration of his modesty. None of them seem to have been struck by the significance of the alternative which he suggested: "I should rather chuse to have them inserted (with your permission) in the magazines, and public papers, than to have them affixed to the copper-plate."<sup>4</sup>

Hervey possessed an unusually generous nature. Although he hesitated to spend upon himself, he was ever ready to help those in need. When he was at Bideford, his friends had to resort to the practice of borrowing from him when he received his

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., Let. 52.

<sup>2</sup>Works, VI:118n.

<sup>3</sup>Gen. Col. Let. 77.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

salary and repaying the loans one by one as his funds became exhausted. Only by that bit of deception could they keep him from giving away more than he could spare.<sup>1</sup>

Among the poor colliers of his Northamptonshire congregations he carried on an extensive charity.<sup>2</sup> He gave away all the profits from the sale of his books and ordered that future royalties were to be used for charitable purposes.<sup>3</sup> The British Traveller (1779) notes that "after the expences of his funeral were discharged, his pecuniary possessions did not amount to 20 shillings."<sup>4</sup>

Although he was so generous, he tried not to be indiscriminate. "I think one guinea is full enough for giving away to a person whose character we are ignorant of."<sup>5</sup> he said. But to families in want, because of prolonged illness or unemployment, he might give five, ten, or even fifteen guineas at a time, taking care to make sure that the gift was anonymous.<sup>6</sup> He urged his

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<sup>1</sup>Cole, op. cit., Part I, p. 33.

<sup>2</sup>John Brown, op. cit., p. 214.

<sup>3</sup>Works, V:141. Romaine's Funeral Sermon. See also Richardson, Correspondence, VI:13.

<sup>4</sup>Burlington, et al., The Modern Universal British Traveller, p. 202.

<sup>5</sup>Gen. Col. Let. 120

<sup>6</sup>Works, V:141



physician acquaintances to give their services occasionally to the poor of villages through which they passed and offered to pay for whatever medicines were required in that enterprise.<sup>1</sup>

An interesting insight into his generosity may be gained from a letter to his brother. It reads:

You need not have sent ye Book about ye Genealogy. I bought it of Rich....; purely out of Charity; that, as He had simply purchased what He could never understand, He might not be a Loser.<sup>2</sup>

Another of his acts of charity seems rather odd today, but it was well meant. While Whitefield was in America, Hervey sent him the money to buy a slave, who was to be instructed in the Christian religion. Whitefield replied: "I think to call your intended purchase WESTON, and shall take care to remind him by whose means he was brought under the everlasting gospel."<sup>3</sup>

Although Hervey lived frugally, it must be admitted that it was not without regard for his social status. Certainly there was considerable difference between his standard of living and that of many of his parishioners. "I dare not visit my poor neighbors," he wrote, "for fear of catching cold in their bleak houses."<sup>4</sup> He had two servants to care for his household,

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<sup>1</sup>John Brown, op. cit., p. 211.

<sup>2</sup>MS letter dated 27 February 1753, Beattie Collection.

<sup>3</sup>Whitefield, Works, II:432.

<sup>4</sup>Gen. Col. Let. 115.

and the following excerpt from a letter to his brother suggests that he provided quite well for his table:

Let me desire you, when you have a piece of wine, that is better than ordinary, to draw off for me ten gallons, & send it, not in Bottles, but in Casks. I would have ten of Mountain, & ten of Port. And may we all say with the spouse in the Canticles, we will remember thy Love rather than Wine.<sup>1</sup>

Hervey was pleasant and cheerful, yet always serious. In conversation he had an engaging manner, being polished, cordial, and sincere. Nevertheless, not many found his company enjoyable, for not only did he lack a genuine sense of humor, but for him one concern overshadowed (almost eclipsed) all others. It is not undue exaggeration to say that he was obsessed with the merits of Jesus Christ. Not only his works and letters but his conversations as well were seized upon as opportunities to inject a discussion of justification through his Saviour's merits and their imputation. "A very famous wit, I know," he said,

characterizes a Pedant, as One who turns every conversation to some favourite and peculiar Subject. If this be a true Definition, the wisest and best Men, that ever lived, were the greatest Pedants. The most excellent and only divine Book in the World, is a Series of Pedantry.--To imitate such Pedantry, I hope, will always be my Study and my Delight.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>MS letter dated June 21, 1752, Beattie Collection.

<sup>2</sup>Letters to Lady F. Shirley, Let. 52.

Imitate he did! Whether the definition be that of pedant or not, it is certainly a fitting description of James Hervey. It is little wonder that his circle of friends was small, but he would not compromise:

When people come to visit me, they expect to hear of Christ; and few come to Weston, but those to whom such discourse is agreeable; nor do I desire the company of any others--talking of Christ is my touchstone, to see whether a person is worth my acquaintance.<sup>1</sup>

Needless to say, the members of polite society around Weston Favell were not attracted by his singlemindedness, nor he by their secular interests. "For my Part," he said, "I can find very few among the wealthy or fashionable, who delight in edifying Conversation. Therefore, they are seldom troubled with my Company, and as seldom vouchsafe to visit me."<sup>2</sup> In fact, almost none but those of similar religious convictions called upon him.<sup>3</sup> Even some of his own relatives were not in sympathy with his evangelical fervor. They attended his family devotions with reluctance and sometimes "turned them into ridicule."<sup>4</sup>

Throughout Hervey's writings and letters is evidence that he was peculiarly fascinated by social position and cultural

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<sup>1</sup>Gen. Col. Let. 153.

<sup>2</sup>Letters to Lady F. Shirley, Let. 53.

<sup>3</sup>According to one of his servants, his usual visitors were limited to Whitefield, Cudworth, Doddridge, Ryland, T. Jones, and a pious young stone mason. (John Brown, op. cit., p. 156.)

<sup>4</sup>John Brown, op. cit., p. 376.

refinement. He wrote his Theron and Aspasio primarily for the "more refined part of the World."<sup>1</sup> Theron was a "Gentleman of fine Taste" and Aspasio "not without his Share of polite Literature and philosophical Knowledge."<sup>2</sup> Whenever possible, scenes in his books depict the refined and genteel life with spacious mansions, libraries, galleries, terraces, summer houses, and beautiful gardens.

He was obviously delighted at meeting members of the nobility among the Countess of Huntingdon's circle of friends. To him those of noble birth were "at once the most undoubted Judges, and the most admired Patterns, of all that is elegant and refined," and he felt that many people "might have a better Opinion of sacred Things, if they found them relished and patronized by Persons, qualified to grace a Court with their Presence."<sup>3</sup>

He relished the opportunity of corresponding with the Countess and with Lady Frances Shirley, remarking to the latter that he would not mention the receipt of her letters

lest such a practice should foment a Spirit of Pride in me, and beprejudical to your Ladyship's Character, as degrading yourself, in vouchsafing to converse with so mean a person  
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<sup>1</sup>Letters to Lady F. Shirley, Let. 106.

<sup>2</sup>Theron and Aspasio, I:1f.

<sup>3</sup>Letters to Lady F. Shirley, Let. 36.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., Let. 23



When Lady Frances, the Earl of Dartmouth, and others of Hervey's acquaintance among the nobility wished to introduce his books to the Prince and Princess of Wales,<sup>1</sup> he was considerably pleased. To Lady Frances he wrote:

... I should never have been known to such grand Personages, if you had not condescended to introduce me. My Name had never been heard by a Royal Ear, if it<sup>2</sup> had not received some Credit by your Ladyship's Notice.

These two quotations are typical illustrations of Hervey's manner of approach to the nobility, but it is only fair to admit that he was not alone in reverence for high station or noble birth. It seems to have been a trait shared to some extent by many of the leading figures in the Evangelical Revival.<sup>3</sup>

Hervey's interests in a life of cultural refinement strikes one as markedly out of keeping with his piety and especially with his singlemindedness. Indeed, as Miss Brown has recently noted, in his personality an "ambiguity of the aesthetic and the religious persists."<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, his passion for Christ was much stronger than any of his other interests, so that his approach to the nobility and to taste and refinement in general was always evangelical. It has

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<sup>1</sup>The parents of George III.

<sup>2</sup>Letters to Lady F. Shirley, Let. 73.

<sup>3</sup>Cardinal Newman recognized this tendency toward sycophancy among the Evangelicals and attempted to explain it as a natural consequence of discarding the authority of bishops. (The British Critic and Quarterly Theological Review, XXVIII (1840), 265.)

<sup>4</sup>W. E. M. Brown, op. cit., p. 57.

already been shown that for this reason his contacts with the polite world were limited.<sup>1</sup> His admiration, however, could not be completely suppressed, and there is an interesting incongruity between the fascination which the life of the nobility held for him, on the one hand, and his desire to convince them of their total depravity, on the other.

Had Hervey not possessed this admiration for the fashionable life, it is doubtful that he would ever have become such a popular author. In his own mind he wrote only for the polite world, and his exaggerated style was an attempt to put evangelical truth in a manner which would attract them. Ironically, his mission to the elite was largely a failure; rather, the common people were the ones who were attracted by his florid, pious expressions and became his most avid readers. Had he written for them in the first place, it is more likely that he would have used a simpler style, such as characterized his sermons. In that case his works would have lacked one of the qualities which determined their popularity.

Finally, Hervey possessed a real appreciation of natural beauty at a time when such a trait was rare. In the forefront of the rediscovery and growing interest in nature that characterized the eighteenth century, he was able to discern more of that which was beautiful in the world about him than were most of his contemporaries.

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<sup>1</sup>supra, p. 35.

His interest in nature was awakened by reading natural theology in the university. Nature Displayed, the English translation of Abbé Pluché's Spectacle de la Nature, so engrossed him that he proceeded to learn Newton's whole system.<sup>1</sup> His textbooks by John Ray and William Derham<sup>2</sup> were representative of the period of Newtonian illumination. Ray's Wisdom of God Manifested in the Works of Creation (1691), a classic of the eighteenth century, had as its dominant theme "How manifold are thy Works, O Lord!" Derham, a country clergyman like Hervey, was representative of that school which believed in the ultimate harmony of science and theology and pursued both.<sup>3</sup> He had closely followed Ray's ideas in his Physico-Theology, which Basil Willey has described as a "long catalogue of relevant characteristics of the terraqueous globe and its living inhabitants, punctuated frequently by pious exclamations."<sup>4</sup>

Another of Derham's works, Astro-Theology, introduced Hervey to astronomy, a subject he further pursued with the help of a mathematician at Bideford.<sup>5</sup> At Collingtree, too, his parishioners reported having seen him lying on his back in the churchyard studying the heavens through his telescope.<sup>6</sup> This

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<sup>1</sup>Ryland, op. cit., p. 21.      <sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Willey, The Eighteenth Century Background, p. 39.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Cole, op. cit., Part II, p. 129.

<sup>6</sup>John Brown, op. cit., p. 159.

hobby found particular expression in his "Contemplations on the Starry Night."

He mastered James Keil's Anatomy of the Human Body and later devoted an entire dialogue of Theron and Aspasio to that topic. Theron's evangelical manner of expounding anatomy drew from John Wesley the tribute that it was "such an illustration of the wisdom of God in the structure of the human body, as I believe cannot be paralleled in either ancient or modern writers."<sup>1</sup>

His excursions in the vicinity of Stoke Abbey appear to have played a large part in developing in him that appreciation of the beauties of nature which is so apparent in his writings. Of one of these trips he wrote to his sister:

I have been about twenty, or twenty-six miles into Cornwall, and seen wondrous workmanship of the all creating God; ragged rocks, roaring seas, frightful precipices, and dreadfully--steep hills.<sup>2</sup>

Such exploration so captivated him that it became one of his most favored pastimes. "My poor heart," he said, "... is peculiarly charmed with the Works of Creation, and knows no higher Entertainment, than a Contemplative rural Excursion ..."<sup>3</sup>

Not alone in the grandeur of the countryside did he find the beauty of his Creator's handiwork. Within the confined of his own garden the evidence was as fully convincing, and through

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<sup>1</sup>The Works of John Wesley, X:326.

<sup>2</sup>Gen. Col. Let. 10.

<sup>3</sup>Letters to Lady F. Shirley, Let. 8.



his hand lens,<sup>1</sup> a constant companion, he discovered "so much of his incomprehensible Wisdom, his amazing Power, his condescending and most profuse Goodness, even in the minutest Specks of the animalcula Creation."<sup>2</sup> His enthusiasm for this instrument carried him almost beyond the bounds of reality. In Theron and Aspasio he recommended its use as a suitable pastime to replace dancing and card-playing, and added:

The Ladies, I am very sure, might find brighter Colours, and more delicate Ornaments, in the Robes and Head-dress of a common Fly; than ever they found amidst the Trinkets of a Toy-Shop. And was the fair Circle of Females once acquainted with the radiant Varnish and rich Studs, that enamel the Cover of a Beetle's Wing; I am apt to think, they would view with less Rapture, with more Indifference, perhaps, with a becoming Disdain, all the pretty Fancies of a Beau's Wardrobe.<sup>3</sup>

This may be absurd, but it certainly is striking proof of his admiration for natural beauty. It is unfortunate that this genuine appreciation was not matched by a less sententious descriptive style. Nevertheless, his scenic sketches did catch the taste of the time and, perhaps more than any other factor, accounted for the extensive popularity of his books.

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<sup>1</sup>Hervey called it his microscope.

<sup>2</sup>Letters to Lady F. Shirley, Let. 11.

<sup>3</sup>Theron and Aspasio, I:284.

## CHAPTER II

### THE MEDITATIONS: PROGENITOR OF THERON AND ASPASIO

Theron and Aspasio, although unquestionably Hervey's magnum opus, was not his most popular work. That honor belongs to his first literary venture, the Meditations and Contemplations. This earlier work was of considerable significance both in shaping the character of Theron and Aspasio and in predetermining its influence in literary and religious circles.

The success which Hervey attained through his Meditations was undoubtedly one of the major reasons why he chose to bring forth his elaborate defense of evangelical theology. The favorable reputation which he enjoyed in the religious world as a result of the earlier work helps to explain why Theron and Aspasio met with such a wide demand and created such a furor. The sketches of natural philosophy and nature which embellished Theron and Aspasio and the unique style in which it was written had been tried and proven in the Meditations. To see something of his successful use of these themes and this style in the earlier work will make it easier to understand why a treatise on theology should appear so oddly adorned. In consideration of all these factors, therefore, it is only proper to preface a study of Theron and Aspasio by a brief examination of the Meditations.

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that would make them acceptable to the gay and fashionable society of the upper classes.<sup>1</sup> Through the artifice of cloaking his religious message with agreeable pictures of nature he planned to catch his readers unaware and present the Gospel to them in a way which would both please and instruct.

The first two essays, "Meditations Among the Tombs" and "Reflections on a Flower Garden," were begun while Hervey was residing at Stoke Abbey, but they were not completed until 1745. Because of the recession in trade caused by the uprising of that year, they were held up for a time and were published in 1746.<sup>2</sup> The idea for the essays came, he says, from the following passage which he read in the Spectator:

Discourses on the vanity of the creature, which represent the barrenness of every thing in this world, and its incapacity of producing any solid or substantial happiness, are useful.--These speculations also, which shew the bright side of things and lay forth those innocent entertainments, which are to be met with among the several objects that encompass us, are no less beneficial.<sup>3</sup>

He was most meticulous in his composition and enlisted the help of several of his friends to criticize first his outline and then his manuscript. Typical of his requests for assistance is this passage from a letter of 1745:

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<sup>1</sup>Gen. Col. Let. 21. Also Works, I:262.

<sup>2</sup>Hervey, Letters, Elegant, Interesting, and Evangelical, p. 183.

<sup>3</sup>Vol. V, No. 393, quoted in Works, I:139n.



This brings the dedication and the preface, which are to introduce a little essay, entitled *Meditations among the tombs, and Reflections on a flower garden*, in two letters to a lady. I hope, Sir, in consequence of your kind promise, you will please to peruse them with the file in your hand. The critic, and the kindness of the friend, in this case, will be inseparable.<sup>1</sup>

But he is careful to add: "The evangelical strain, I believe, must be preserved; because, otherwise the introductory thoughts will not harmonize with the subsequent; the porch will be unsuitable to the building."<sup>2</sup>

In his first piece, "*Meditations Among the Tombs*," Hervey wished to remind his readers of their inevitable death and invite them to set their souls in order, that they might meet their end with calm and cheerful resignation.<sup>3</sup> "Since we are so liable to be dispossessed of this earthly tabernacle," he says in the essay, "let us look upon ourselves only as tenants at will; and hold ourselves in perpetual readiness, to depart at a moments warning."<sup>4</sup>

The scene is the churchyard at Kilkhampton, in Cornwall, where he was forced to spend some time while on a trip through

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<sup>1</sup>The lady mentioned in the letter was the daughter of his friend, the Rev. William Thompson, Vicar of St. Genny's in Cornwall. The dedication was to have been to her sister, whose untimely death took place before the essays were published. Miss Brown (*The Polished Shaft*, pp. 8 and 33.) hints that Hervey had more than a friendly interest in the latter young lady and says that it is supposed to be on her account that he accepted the curacy at Bideford. This seems unlikely, for as George Davies (*The Early Cornish Evangelicals*, p. 33.) has pointed out, Thompson's first marriage took place about 1740. Hervey supplied St. Genny's for six weeks in 1739 during Thompson's absence (Davies, p. 32.) and went to Bideford early in 1740.

<sup>2</sup>Gen. Col. Let. 21.

<sup>3</sup>*Works*, I:lxii.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 85.

that region. Hervey wanders among the tombstones, reading the inscriptions and speculating on the death of each person and the state of each soul. In turn he meditates on the deaths of an infant, a youth, a young man, a woman in childbirth, a religious father, a soldier, and others. The whole tone of the essay is melancholy; parts of it are designed to be extremely sad. His portrayal of the wife at the death-bed of the religious father is one of the most touching:

Her hands, trembling under direful apprehensions, wipe the cold dew from the livid cheeks; and sometimes stay the sinking head on her gentle arms, sometimes rest it on her compassionate bosom.--See! how she gazes, with a speechless ardor, on the pale countenance and meagre features. Speechless her tongue; but she looks unutterable things. While all her soft passions throb with unavailing<sup>1</sup> fondness, and her very soul bleeds with exquisite anguish.

The effect is lost at some points because his images are quite plainly ridiculous; as, for example, in this passage where he speculates on the death of the infant:

Staying only to wash away its native impurity in the laver of regeneration, it bid a speedy adieu to time, and terrestrial things.--What did the little hasty sojourner find so forbidding and disgusting in our upper world, to occasion its precipitant exit? ... did our new-come stranger begin to sip the cup of life; but, perceiving the bitterness, turn away its head and refuse the draught?<sup>2</sup>

A few of his passages are even rather repulsive. The following, in which he speaks of all those buried in the graveyard, is one of his worst:

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<sup>1</sup>Works, I:92

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 74.

Perhaps, their crumbling bones mix, as they moulder; and those who, while they lived, stood aloof in irreconcilable variance, here fall into mutual embraces, and even incorporate with each other in the grave.<sup>1</sup>

In the second essay Hervey exchanges the melancholy of the tombs for the bright and beautiful scenes of a flower garden. "What colours, what charming colours are here!" he exclaims.

These so nobly bold; and those so delicately languid. What a glow is enkindled in some! what a gloss shines upon others! In one, methinks, I see the ruby with her bleeding radiance [sic]; in another, the sapphire with her sky-tintured blue; in all such an exquisite richness of dyes, as no other set of paintings in the universe can boast.<sup>2</sup>

Although the surroundings have changed, the evangelical emphasis has not. "To an attentive mind," he says, "the garden turns preacher, and its blooming tenants are so many lively sermons."<sup>3</sup> He describes the various flowers in the garden and reminds his readers that for each one they are indebted to Jesus Christ.<sup>4</sup> He points out the wisdom and goodness of the Creator in providing so many varieties and spacing them appropriately throughout the year.<sup>5</sup> He even depicts the garden in its season of death and decay. "But," says he, "amidst these views of general ruin, here is our refuge; this is our consolation; We know that our Redeemer liveth."<sup>6</sup>

Hervey felt that "Reflections on a Flower Garden" would serve as a sufficient contrast to "Meditations Among the Tombs."

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 169.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 205.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 161.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 176 and 185.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 219.

The latter, he feared, was so doleful that it might disgust or even terrify some if published alone.<sup>1</sup> He thought that by weaving his message into sketches of floral beauty, he had a better chance of attracting the polite circles and, consequently, more opportunity to convince them of the sufficiency of Christ for salvation.<sup>2</sup>

To the second edition of the Meditations in 1748 he added another volume comprising two more essays, "Contemplations on the Night" and "Contemplations on the Starry Heavens." These had the same florid imagery as the earlier ones. Whereas those had surveyed nature in what was to Hervey its deepest horrors and its richest beauties, the newer essays were designed to display it in its most composed and most magnificent aspects.<sup>3</sup>

In the "Contemplations on the Night" Hervey was trying to show others how to use their flights of fancy for meditating in a consistent, regular, and useful way.<sup>4</sup> He describes the stillness of the night:

What a profound silence has composed the world! So profound is the silence, that my very breath seems a noise; the ticking of my watch is distinctly heard; if I do not stir it creates a disturbance.--There is now none of that confused din from the tumultuous city, no voice of jovial rustics from the shady thicket.--Every lip is sealed. Not the least whisper invades the air; nor the least motion rustles among the boughs.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Letter in Tyerman, The Oxford Methodists, p. 237.

<sup>2</sup>Works, I:lxiii.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 261f.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 263.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 282.



But the stillness only suggests to him the unconcern of man for the things of the spirit:

If, in the midst of this deep and universal composure, ten thousand bellowing thunders should burst over my head, and rend the skies with their united volleys; how should I bear so unexpected a shock? It would stun my senses, and confound my thoughts. I should shudder in every limb; perhaps sink to the earth with terror.--Consider then, O Mortals! consider the much more prodigious and amazing call, which will, ere long, alarm your sleeping bones.<sup>1</sup>

He portrays the beauties of the night and praises God for his goodness in providing them; he recounts the dangers of the night and points out man's providential protection from them. Throughout, he keeps foremost the analogy between the night and that final night to come after death, and seldom misses an opportunity of injecting a warning to the reader to flee from the wrath to come.

Hervey sees in the night sky the most sublime of all the works of the Creator. Noting that "the vulgar are apprehensive of nothing more, than a multitude of bright spangles dropt over the aethereal blue,"<sup>2</sup> he proceeds to depict the scene in his "Contemplations on the Starry Heavens" as a grand operation divinely controlled. Supported by references to the works of Newton and Derham he elaborates upon the discoveries of astronomy in a manner which is half scientific, half evangelical. While meditating upon the vast sizes and distances in the universe, he does not miss the beauty of the whole array. "How bright the starry ~~diamonds~~ shine!" he cries.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 283.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 345.

The ambition of eastern monarchs could imagine no distinction more noble or sublime, than that of being likened to those beaming orbs. They form night's richest dress; and sparkle upon her sable robe, like jewels of the finest lustre. Like jewels! I wrong their character. The lucid stone has no brilliancy; quenched is the flame even of the golden topaz; compared with those glowing decorations of heaven.<sup>1</sup>

But he never becomes so enraptured by what he sees that he forgets for a moment his real purpose. The following passage shows how he keeps his message constantly before the reader:

O! ye mighty orbs, that roll along the spaces of the sky; I wondered a little while ago, at your vast dimensions, and ample circuits. But now my amazement ceases; or rather, is entirely swallowed up by a much more stupendous subject. Methinks, your enormous bulk is shrivelled to an atom; your prodigious revolutions are contracted to a span; while I muse upon the far more elevated heights, and unfathomable depths; the infinitely more extended lengths, and unlimited breadths of this love of GOD in CHRIST JESUS.<sup>2</sup>

To the third edition, also published in 1748, were added two small pieces, a "Descant upon Creation" and "A Winter Piece." Of these little need be said. They are from the same mold as the others. In the "Descant upon Creation" he pours out his soul in praise for the love of Christ, addressing in turn various elements of the creation from stars and planets to birds and bees. The "Winter Piece" was written at the request of several of his friends. One of them wrote him anonymously that "Storms and Tempests may calm the soul--Snow and Ice be taught to warm the heart, and praise the Creator."<sup>3</sup> Like all early Evangelicals,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 416.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 356.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 437.

Hervey was not one to miss an opportunity to "improve an occasion," and he readily accepted the challenge. He meditates in his unusual way upon the usual winter phenomena: shortened days, decaying vegetation, winter rains and snows, thaws and floods, and dismal winter nights.

In the Meditations three separate factors favoring its early popularity can be distinguished. The first--a unique style--is Hervey's distinct contribution to eighteenth century literature. The other two--the similarity of parts of his work to that of the "graveyard school" of poetry and his extensive treatment of nature--both tend to identify him as one of the precursors of the Romantic revival, which reached its culmination with Wordsworth and Coleridge.

Hervey's style is florid in the extreme. Almost every possible term has been used by his critics in the last two hundred years to describe it. "Florid, high-flown, luxuriant, bombastic, stilted,"<sup>1</sup> "tumid and over ornamented rhetoric,"<sup>2</sup> "a farrago of high flown sentiment clothed in the most turgid language,"<sup>3</sup> "at once affected and commonplace,"<sup>4</sup> and "euphuism almost at its worst"<sup>5</sup> are just a few of the typical comments.

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<sup>1</sup>Ryle, The Christian Leaders of the Last Century, p. 342.

<sup>2</sup>Lecky, A History of England in the Eighteenth Century, II:551.

<sup>3</sup>Abbey and Overton, The English Church in the Eighteenth Century, II:173.

<sup>4</sup>Cambridge History of English Literature, X:366.

<sup>5</sup>Gill, The Romantic Movement and Methodism, p. 75.

Perhaps the most colorful description was that of Southey, who remarked that Hervey's style resembled "a confectioner's shop just before Twelfth Day."<sup>1</sup>

Only in recent years does it appear that literary critics have been able to find much to say in Hervey's favor. Grigson, in a book published in 1946, finds "some poetry of phrase"<sup>2</sup> in the Meditations in spite of its sententiousness. Miss Brown, whose Polished Shaft (1950) has the best literary analysis of Hervey's works to date, admits the futility of trying to read Hervey today but insists that he must be judged against the background of his time. She holds that his style introduced fresh and vigorous elements into eighteenth century literature.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, some modern critical treatments of the literature of that period omit him altogether.

One is tempted to think that Hervey's general rule was never to use a short word where a long one was available and never a single word where several would express the same thought. Thus "blood" becomes "the crimson fluid which distributes health,"<sup>4</sup> "eye" becomes "rolling sparkler,"<sup>5</sup> "baptism" becomes "the laver of regeneration,"<sup>6</sup> and for "sun" he substitutes "radiant orb"<sup>7</sup> or "refluent charmer."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Southey's Commonplace Book, IV:342.

<sup>2</sup>Grigson, Before the Romantics, p. 346.

<sup>3</sup>p. 56

<sup>4</sup>Works, I:84.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 115.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 147.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 204.





Some of his scenes in the flower garden are unusually labored and wordy. Here, for example, is his description of the heliotropes:

Disposed at proper distance, I observe a range of strong and stately stalks. They stand like towers, along the walls of a fortified city; or rise, like lofty spires, amidst the group of houses. They part, at the top, into several pensile spiky pods; from each of which we shall soon see a fine figure displaying itself; rounded into a form, which constitutes a perfect circle; spread wide open, into the most frank and communicative air; and tinged with the colour, which is so peculiarly captivating to the miser's eye.<sup>1</sup>

Another good illustration of his marked verbosity is his treatment of an eclipse of the moon:

Sometimes I have seen that resplendent globe stript of her radiance; or, according to the emphatical language of scripture, "turned into blood." The earth, interposing with its opake body, intercepted the solar rays, and cast its own gloomy shadow on the moon. The malignant influence gained upon her sickening orb; extinguished, more and more, the feeble remainders of light; till at length, like one in a deep swoon, no comeliness was left in her countenance; she was totally overspread with darkness.<sup>2</sup>

Few of his other passages, however, are as unsatisfactory as his attempts to improve Scripture. Isaiah 40:31 after Hervey's revision reads as follows:

Whereas they that wait upon the LORD, and confide in his grace, shall press on, with a generous ardor, from one degree of religious improvement to another. Instead of exhausting, they shall renew their strength; difficulties shall animate, and toil invigorate them. They shall mount up, as with soaring wings, above all opposition; they shall be carried through every discouragement, as eagles cleave the yielding air.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 331.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 365.

Occasionally there is a passage in which his style is more pleasing. If the word "potable" be for the moment overlooked, these few lines from the "Descant upon Creation" might well be classed as blank verse.

Ye gushing Fountains, that trickle potable silver thro' the matted grass: ye fine transparent Streams, that glide, in crystal waves, along your fringed banks: ye deep and stately Rivers, that wind and wander in your course ...<sup>1</sup>

But at this point the passage loses its poetic savor and reverts to the usual verboseness.

Hervey's style drew to the Meditations a large number of pious but not well educated people, who accepted it as a fashionable work of the day. It is questionable, however, whether the learned or the fashionable themselves ever generally approved. Those who endorsed the work--men like Doddridge or the élite circle surrounding the Countess of Huntingdon--were more likely attracted either by its Calvinistic tone or by their friendship for the author.

Certainly by the end of the century the Meditations had lost all visage of fashionable literature and had become a devotional book of the people. In his Memoirs of Hervey (1806) John Brown says that "persons of refined taste have expressed themselves much less satisfied with his language than his thoughts."<sup>2</sup> Coleridge in a lecture in 1808 is reported to have said:

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 244

<sup>2</sup>p. 425.

The many feel what is beautiful, but they also deem a great deal to be beautiful which is not in fact so: they cannot distinguish the counterfeit from the genuine. The vulgar love the Bible and also Hervey's "Meditations."<sup>1</sup>

That this attitude prevailed from the beginning cannot be determined with equal certainty, but most of the evidence seems to point to that conclusion as the most probable.

During the preparation of the second edition of the Meditations, Richardson sent the following information to Hervey:

A Gentleman who is an admirable Judge (to whom I presented one), this Day told me, that he thought the Subject was too much ornamented: And tho' a fine Scholar, found fault with the Learning display'd in the Notes. A Flower-Garden, and a Tomb, he would have it, required only plain and good English, for English readers, and for Youth, for whom by the Style, he said, the piece was principally calculated; <sup>2</sup>since he thought it too fanciful for the Solid and Learned.

Three years later Lady Bradshaigh wrote to the publisher:

"I suppose this work is reckoned a well-wrote piece; and yet the style does not please me in many places. Do you think it quite easy, Sir?"<sup>3</sup> Richardson replied:

Your opinion of Hervey's Meditations, given with your usual diffidence, is very much my own. I love the man, and think him a devout and good man: but his style is too flowery for prose, too affected: a judicious friend of mine calls it prose run mad.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Robinson, H. C., Diary, Reminiscences, and Correspondence, I:268.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted in McKillop, Samuel Richardson: Printer and Novelist, p. 183.

<sup>3</sup>The Correspondence of Samuel Richardson, VI:7.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

Bishop Warburton sharply criticized Doddridge for endorsing the work. "I think you do not set a just value on yourself," he wrote,

when you lend your name or countenance to such weak, but well meaning rapsodies as Harvey's Meditations. This may do well enough with the people; but it is the learned that claim you.<sup>1</sup>

When Samuel Johnson saw the work he ridiculed it and extemporaneously parodied it in a "Meditation on a Pudding."<sup>2</sup> Apparently his quip "If you call a dog HERVEY, I shall love him"<sup>3</sup> did not extend equally to other humans.

In 1764 Newcomb produced a poetical version of the Meditations, and the Critical Review<sup>4</sup> expressed the wish that he had chosen a better original on which to exercise his talents. The Critical Review never did like Hervey's works.

On the other hand, when Theron and Aspasio was published a few years later several of the literary reviews spoke rather favorably of Hervey's style.<sup>5</sup> This does not necessarily mean that it had the approval of critics of discerning literary taste, but does show the necessity of using caution lest Hervey's distinctive literary contribution be too hastily banished to the ranks of popular literature.

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<sup>1</sup>The Correspondence and Diary of Philip Doddridge, V:125.

<sup>2</sup>Boswell, Life of Samuel Johnson, V:351. Boswell wrote down this performance as best he could remember it and recorded it in this work, but it is hardly worth repeating here.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., I:106.

<sup>4</sup>18:64 (1764).

<sup>5</sup>Infra, p. 83f.



Whether Hervey himself was ever able to ascertain his literary fate is open to question. He has written very little about it. In June, 1754, when he was trying to decide if it would be wise to publish Theron and Aspasio in three volumes, he wrote to Lady Frances Shirley:

I would gladly have my Books in those Hands, which hold the Plough, and ply the Distaff.--Because, these Persons are as nearly related to the all-creating God, and as highly beloved by the ever-blessed Jesus, as those who wear a Crown, or wield a Sceptre.<sup>1</sup>

From this it may appear that he accepted his humbler following, but in another letter, which is undated but from its context appears to have been written in 1757,<sup>2</sup> he says to the same correspondent:

Your Observation, I acknowledge, is very just, with regard to the Writings of Mr. Adam and Mr. Hervey. Mine are not fit for ordinary People; I never give them to such Persons; and dissuade this Class of Men from procuring them. O! that, accompanied by God's blessed Spirit, they may be of some Service to the more refined Part of the World!<sup>3</sup>

It would appear that his purpose, at least, never changed.

The new elements which eventually became dominant in the Romantic revival had already begun to take shape early in the eighteenth century. By the middle of the century the neo-classical standard of taste, in which reason was the prime consideration, was beginning to fall into disfavor. James Hervey

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<sup>1</sup>Letters to Lady F. Shirley, Let. 68.

<sup>2</sup>It mentions Hervey's recommendation of Jenks's work. This recommendation was dated October 30, 1756. See Works, VI:455.

<sup>3</sup>Letters to Lady F. Shirley, Let. 106.

incorporated two of these new elements in his Meditations and Contemplations. Considered either as a member of the "graveyard school" or as a nature writer Hervey deserves a place among the more commonly accepted heralds of the Romantic revival such as Parnell, Thomson, Crabbe, Cowper, and Lady Winchilsea.<sup>1</sup>

The "graveyard" or "mortuary" strain in English poetry was a development from the funeral elegy. Throughout the neo-classical period elegies were popular and profuse. Along with a considerable mass of what John Draper calls "wretched stuff"<sup>2</sup> were some poems of permanent value, such as Parnell's Night Piece on Death and, of course, Gray's Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard.

The elegy continued to flourish into the latter half of the century. Gray's Elegy, the most famous of the species, was not published until 1751. Nevertheless, the increasing use of the elegiac form for parody and satire in the 1730's and 1740's showed that its popularity was even then declining.<sup>3</sup>

The graveyard poets formed a connecting link between the elegy proper and the melancholy of early Romanticism. They enlarged the scope of the traditional elegy to include a more general treatment of death themes and at the same time liberated

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<sup>1</sup>For these five see Dyson, Augustans and Romantics 1689-1830, p. 88.

<sup>2</sup>Draper, The Funeral Elegy and the Rise of English Romanticism, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 304.

it from the customary verse form.<sup>1</sup> Young's Night Thoughts, the first part of which appeared in 1742, is probably the best known of this type of literature. Blair's Grave, produced independently the following year, was almost as popular.

Hervey's "Meditations Among the Tombs" should also be classed as a contribution of the graveyard school. He wrote in prose, but the whole of his essay is characterized by descriptions of death, death-bed scenes, tombs, skeletons, and other morbid features of the kind popularized by the graveyard poets. Although he claimed to have taken the idea for this piece from the Spectator, there is general agreement that he patterned it more after the Night Thoughts than anything else. He was continually reading Young's book during the preparation of his own, and the Meditations abound with quotations from the Night Thoughts. Blair's Grave and Burton's earlier Anatomy of Melancholy may also have influenced him.<sup>2</sup>

The mortuary strain, like the elegiac, owed its popularity to the widespread feeling of melancholy in the first half of the century. "Melancholy" was a term of the common man, but the sentiment seems to have had no class barriers. Steele, in Tatler No. 89, remarked that "that calm and elegant satisfaction which the vulgar call Melancholy, is the true and proper Delight

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>Gill, The Romantic Movement and Methodism, p. 72.

of Men of Knowledge and Virtue." This mood was influential in shaping the prevailing literary taste. Even at the middle of the century Gray could boast that his Elegy would have been just as popular if he had written in the prose of Hervey's "Meditations Among the Tombs."<sup>1</sup>

To a modern reader this first essay would seem the strangest of Hervey's pieces, but for many of his melancholy contemporaries it was the most attractive. Lady Bradshaigh undoubtedly reflected the mood of the time when she wrote of Hervey:

I cannot but say, I accompanied him with much greater pleasure among the Tombs, than in his Flower Garden, not however without some horror, though, at the same time, I felt a gloomy delight, and was greatly moved at some of his descriptions.<sup>2</sup>

The second pre-Romantic element that contributed to the popularity of the Meditations was the extensive use of nature themes. The discovery of nature was a phenomenon of the eighteenth century. Before that time it was almost unknown in English literature.<sup>3</sup> Thomson was the first writer to succeed in popularizing nature. His Seasons began to make their appearance in 1726, and from that time on the interest in the subject steadily mounted; yet, even in the middle of the century a concern for natural science and an appreciation of natural beauty were rare gifts.

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<sup>1</sup>Cambridge History of English Literature, X:124.

<sup>2</sup>The Correspondence of Samuel Richardson, VI:7.

<sup>3</sup>Turberville, ed., Johnson's England, II:30.



That a person of Hervey's evangelical temper should possess such gifts was even more unusual, for in general there was little appreciation of beauty, either in nature or in literature and art, among the members of the evangelical movement.<sup>1</sup> But Hervey was able to see more of the natural beauty around him than were most of his contemporaries. He quickly moved out from among the tombs, and in his second piece, "Reflections on a Flower Garden," replaced his melancholy meditating with a lively interest in the beauties of the flower garden.

In the four remaining essays Hervey also made extensive use of nature themes. The "Contemplations on the Starry Heavens" and the two smaller pieces are constructed almost entirely around descriptions of natural objects and phenomena ranging all the way from snowflakes to the milky way. The "Contemplations on the Night" combines natural scenery with melancholy thoughts on death to give a mood halfway between that of the "Meditations Among the Tombs" and Hervey's other pieces. For this reason it more closely approaches the mood of Young's Night Thoughts than do any of the other pieces.

Both the Night Thoughts and Thomson's Seasons were important influences in Hervey's use of nature themes. Amy Reed declares that this "is plain from the whole course of his thought

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<sup>1</sup>Stoughton, Religion in England under Queen Anne and the Georges, II:107.

and from many of his phrases."<sup>1</sup> Hervey, himself, made no secret of the fact. He quoted frequently from both works, and in a footnote acknowledged his indebtedness to the Night Thoughts, which he referred to as "beautiful and sublime poems" that gave him "fresh pleasure, and richer improvement, from every renewed perusal."<sup>2</sup>

Hervey's essays also reflect his interest in the discoveries of natural science, for they abound with scientific data on biology and astronomy. In the "Contemplations on the Starry Heavens" he goes into considerable detail to explain the structure and operation of the universe. In the previous chapter it was noted that his interest in nature and science was due in no small measure to John Ray's Wisdom of God in Creation and Derham's Astro-Theology. Many of the facts which Hervey gives in the Meditations were taken from Derham's work.

Miss Brown suggests that Robert Boyle, too, may have had a direct influence on Hervey's treatment of nature, and she points out that Boyle at least indicates Hervey's way of thought. In his Occasional Reflections (1665)<sup>3</sup> Boyle had used the data from some of his scientific experiments as material for his pious reflections and had recommended the same practice to all. He had also tried to keep the profusion of scientific details subservient to the moral which he found in them. This would undoubtedly have appealed more to Hervey than the primary concern of the scientific

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<sup>1</sup>Reed, The Background of Gray's Elegy, p. 202.

<sup>2</sup>Works, I:401.

<sup>3</sup>See p. 19.

pietists such as Ray and Derham with the details as evidence of an ordered universe.<sup>1</sup>

The Meditations rose almost at once to a place of eminence. Hervey, pleased and somewhat surprised, quickly pulled himself together and set about to finish a second volume. New editions were required at the rate of about one a year for over fifteen years, and by 1791 the work had gone into twenty-five authorized editions and had been translated into several foreign languages.

The literary critics at first took no special notice of the work. In listing the publication of the third edition the Gentlemen's Magazine merely commented that it had received a "high character" of the work.<sup>2</sup> But Richardson, who printed the first two editions, recognized their popular appeal and wrote to Hervey: "I think every Person, whether in Years, or in Youth, may be delighted and instructed by it ..."<sup>3</sup>

The Calvinistic Evangelicals and dissenters were united in praise of the work. Richard Pearsall, later a friend of Hervey and a feeble imitator of his style, inquired in 1746 if

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<sup>1</sup>W.E.M. Brown, The Polished Shaft, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup>18:240 (1748).

<sup>3</sup>Quoted in McKillop, Samuel Richardson: Printer and Novelist, p. 183.

Doddridge knew the author. Persall confessed that he had been "charmed with the lively images, striking expressions, and serious piety" which he found in the essays.<sup>1</sup> John Ryland, another of Hervey's evangelical friends, remarked that in the Meditations

people of the finest sense, of the most elegant taste, and the highest relish for the Gospel, saw a new species of writing, which pleased the mind, instructed the understanding, charmed the imagination, fired the passions, and spread a glow of devotion and delight through the whole soul.<sup>2</sup>

These tributes would be typical of the attitude of the evangelically minded Calvinists of Hervey's day.

For a time the work is said to have been more popular even than Law's Serious Call.<sup>3</sup> It found a place on the bookshelves of many people along with Young's Night Thoughts and Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress.<sup>4</sup> It formed a part of Robert Burns's early reading,<sup>5</sup> and James Boswell admits that he had formed a liking for it in his early years.<sup>6</sup> In his Memoirs of Hervey, first published in 1806, John Brown noted that the Meditations had "wonderfully contributed to the diffusion of evangelical truth in Britain and elsewhere" for half a century

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<sup>1</sup>The Correspondence and Diary of Philip Doddridge, IV:481.

<sup>2</sup>The Character of the Rev. James Hervey, p. 306.

<sup>3</sup>Stephen, English Literature and Society in the Eighteenth Century, p. 154.

<sup>4</sup>Gill, op. cit., p. 73.

<sup>5</sup>W. E. M. Brown, op. cit., p. 51.

<sup>6</sup>Life of Samuel Johnson, V:351.



and expressed the hope that its effect might continue for ages to come.<sup>1</sup> As late as 1873 Tyerman testified that few works were greater favorites at that time than the Meditations and that the young still read it "with avidity."<sup>2</sup>

Hervey's immediate and pleasing success with his first work must have given him considerable encouragement to write and publish Theron and Aspasio. In the nine years that passed between the publication of the first volume of the Meditations and that of Theron and Aspasio at least that many authorized editions had been printed by his London booksellers alone; some of them had comprised several thousand volumes.<sup>3</sup> This widespread circulation of his first work by 1755 and the esteem in which it was held by the Calvinistic faction of the evangelical movement undoubtedly accounted in large measure for the impact that he made on the religious world by publishing Theron and Aspasio.

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<sup>1</sup>p. 425.

<sup>2</sup>Tyerman, The Oxford Methodists, pp. 201 and 327.

<sup>3</sup>The edition of January, 1750, for example, consisted of five thousand volumes. (Cole, Herveiana, Letters of Hervey, p. 35.)

Encouraged by Whitefield and several other evangelical friends, he resolved to produce a treatise which would present more directly the plan of salvation in which he so fervently

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Brown, Memoirs of the Life and Character of James Hervey, p. 435.

### CHAPTER III

#### INTRODUCTION TO THERON AND ASPASIO

Hervey's success with the Meditations had left little doubt that his reputation as a religious writer was well established. Having thus won for himself a following which he hoped extended into the circle of fashionable upper-class society, he determined to press his advantage to the full and make a more direct appeal to his élite readers.

His main concern was neither for graveyards nor for nature; it was for Christ. The tombs and the night had provided him with settings which could be particularly well adapted to a proclamation of the urgency of the Gospel, and the nature sketches had given him frequent opportunity to point out the wisdom and goodness of the Creator. Nevertheless, the subject matter of his essays had limited considerably the scope of his religious observations, and in the Meditations he had few opportunities to introduce the doctrine dearest to his heart--justification by imputed righteousness.

Encouraged by Whitefield and several other evangelical friends,<sup>1</sup> he resolved to produce a treatise which would present more directly the plan of salvation in which he so fervently

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<sup>1</sup>Brown, Memoirs of the Life and Character of James Hervey, p. 433.

believed. The result was Theron and Aspasio: Or a Series of Dialogues and Letters Upon the Most Important and Interesting Subjects.

The kernal of this three-volume work can be found in two long letters which Hervey wrote in 1746 to the Rev. John Robins, Rector of Clovelly and a neighbor of Paul Orchard. Robins had evidently sent a request for Hervey's views on the doctrine of imputed righteousness.<sup>1</sup> Hervey replied that sometime before he received Robins' letter he had been visited by "two gentlemen of distinguished ingenuity, and eminent in one of the learned professions." They had taken a ride to a noble old mansion about a mile from Weston Favell, and under a fine alcove in the gardens they had discussed the Christian Gospel.<sup>2</sup>

His friends could not assent to the idea of Christ's righteousness being imputed. A friendly debate ensued, and Hervey gives the substance of his argument in his letters to Robins.<sup>3</sup> Many of his statements in these letters appear again in Theron and Aspasio, identical almost to the word.

Whether or not this incident was the historical inception of his book is at least open to question. Charles Hole has accepted it as fact and is at no loss to identify one of the visitors as Dr. Stonhouse.<sup>4</sup> According to John Cole the mansion

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<sup>1</sup>Hervey, Letters, Elegant, Interesting, and Evangelical, p. 192.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 189.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 189-274.

<sup>4</sup>The Northampton Mercury, August 26, 1904.

described by Hervey actually existed at Great Billing, and he even locates the alcove at the end of the grounds.<sup>1</sup> But it is something of a coincidence if such a discussion proved so convenient an answer to Robins' letter. Moreover, the whole incident as related by Hervey sounds so much like the setting of Theron and Aspasio that the possibility must be left open that he was merely presenting an early draft of his book.

Although it must remain no more than a conjecture that he had actually begun Theron and Aspasio by 1746, it is known from one of his letters that parts of the book were in manuscript form before he went to London in 1750.<sup>2</sup> Thus the process of writing extended over a period of at least five years. During this time the manuscripts were sent to many of his friends for their comments on both his style and his theology. He weighed carefully all of these suggestions and incorporated many of them into his work. George Whitefield, Philip Doddridge, Richard Pearsall, John Ryland, and James Stonhouse were among those of his evangelical colleagues who read and criticized the manuscripts.

Whitefield, in replying to Hervey's request for help, said: "I have received and read your manuscripts; but for me to play the critic on them, would be like holding up a candle to the sun."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Cole, Herveiana, Part I, p. 48.

<sup>2</sup>Hervey, Original Letters of the Rev. James Hervey, p. 34.

<sup>3</sup>The Works of the Rev. George Whitefield, II:431.



However, he promised to "mark a few places" before he left London and send the manuscripts on to Hervey's brother. In the next seven months he found time to read only one dialogue, but his corrections must have been considerable. "How many pardons shall I ask," he wrote, "for mangling, and I fear murdering your dear Theron and Aspasio?"<sup>1</sup>

Hervey sent the manuscripts to the Countess of Huntingdon with a request that she make whatever corrections or improvements she saw fit. He also suggested that she enlist the aid of some of her acquaintances among the nobility. "Your remarks," he said, "and those of your friends may supply the sterility of my invention and the poverty of my language."<sup>2</sup> Lady Huntingdon willingly co-operated in this design. She consulted as many of her friends as she considered useful critics and sent their comments along to Hervey.<sup>3</sup> It was his desire to dedicate the Dialogues<sup>4</sup> to the Countess but for some unknown reason she declined. She must have recommended her aunt as a more suitable patron. At any rate Hervey then made the same request of Lady Frances Shirley, and she obligingly allowed her name to grace his work.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 479.

<sup>2</sup>The Life and Times of Selina Countess of Huntingdon, I:188. Letter of Hervey quoted.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 189.

<sup>4</sup>Another common name for Theron and Aspasio, taken from its subtitle.

<sup>5</sup>Letters to Lady F. Shirley, Lets. 69 and 70.

The manuscripts of the first three dialogues were also sent to John Wesley for revision. He made only a few insignificant corrections and returned them. Hervey was not satisfied and sent them back for a more thorough treatment. This time Wesley replied in a long letter setting forth major criticisms which undermined Hervey's main thesis. Needless to say, Wesley's views were not accepted. An estrangement took place between the two old friends, but the consideration of this affair properly belongs to the account of the controversy in a later chapter.

As the work neared completion the bookseller decided that it could not be contained in less than three volumes.<sup>1</sup> Hervey had some anxious doubts as to whether a three-volume set would sell and hurriedly sought the advice of several of his friends. "As You know the Taste & Temper of the polite World," he wrote to Lady Frances, "I should be much obliged for your Advice. And I beg you will not flatter my Vanity; but if You think, that three Volumes on a religious Subject will be insupportable, be so kind as to tell me plainly."<sup>2</sup> He was also concerned about their wider market. "Many will not have ability to purchase them," he wrote to another friend; "many not have leisure to read them; and to some, I fear, the very sight of three volumes would be like loads of meat to a sickly or squeamish stomach."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Gen. Col. Let. 117.

<sup>2</sup>Letters to Lady F. Shirley, Let. 67.

<sup>3</sup>Gen. Col. Let. 117.

Yet the only way that he could reduce the work to two volumes, he felt, was to cut out those parts which had been put in especially to entertain his readers and hold their attention. "These I am afraid to lop off," he said, "lest it should be like wiping the bloom from the plum, or taking the gold from the gingerbread."<sup>1</sup> In the end either his friends were able to overcome his fears, or else he was forced to accept the larger set as the lesser of the two evils, for in February, 1755, Theron and Aspasio was published in three volumes. There were two sizes: a large octavo and a smaller, more numerous and cheaper duodecimo.

Theron and Aspasio may best be described as a theological plan of salvation presented in the form of dialogues and letters and interspersed with sketches of nature and other diversionary topics of the kind popularized in Hervey's Meditations. Nearly the whole of the three volumes consists of conversation or correspondence between two fashionable gentlemen, Theron and Aspasio. Hervey introduces them in this manner:

Theron was a Gentleman of fine Taste; of accurate, rather than extensive Reading; and particularly charmed with the Study of Nature. He traced the Planets in their Courses, and examined the Formation of the meanest Vegetable; not merely to gratify a refined Curiosity, but chiefly to cultivate the nobler Principles of Religion and Morality.

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Aspasio, was not without his Share of polite Literature, and philosophical Knowledge. He had taken a Tour through the Circle of the Sciences; and, having transiently surveyed the Productions of human Learning, devoted his final Attention to the inspired Writings.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., Let. 122.

<sup>2</sup>Theron and Aspasio, I:1f.

Theron is not an unbeliever nor a deist. He accepts the penal theory of the atonement but neither original sin nor total depravity. His idea of salvation involves sincerity, repentance, and good works. He is an avowed enemy to the doctrine of imputed righteousness, but in order to oppose the doctrine of atonement he has to engage in a mock fight against Aspasio.<sup>1</sup> His contribution amounts to more than that of a foil to Aspasio, for he has a distinctive religious experience of the wisdom and goodness of God in creation to communicate. In this role he portrays something of Hervey's own love of nature and appreciation of natural beauty. Although this trait is shared to some extent by Aspasio, it is much more marked in Theron, from whose mouth and pen come most of the descriptive passages in the Dialogues.

Aspasio is a moderate Calvinist with evangelical beliefs and a predilection for the doctrine of imputed righteousness. In fact, his theological position is exactly that of the author himself, as Hervey has made quite clear in one of his private letters.<sup>2</sup> Even without this information, however, one would naturally conclude from the way in which Aspasio's point of view always prevails that he speaks the sentiments of Hervey.

Dialogue as a form for controversial divinity was not uncommon in the eighteenth century, but Hervey has explained that he chose it for a special purpose. He thought that it would make him appear more modest if his views were delivered from the mouths of other persons. In addition, by investing his characters with

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 201.

<sup>2</sup>Gen. Col. Let. 196.



a social status superior to his own he believed that he could give a greater dignity to their remarks.<sup>1</sup> This latter point he considered of some importance in writing for fashionable society.

With one exception the theological discussion in the Dialogues is approached by way of one of the sketches which Hervey used, as he says, to "soften the Asperities of Argument."<sup>2</sup> In all but five dialogues these are scenes from nature not unlike those in the Meditations. This passage, for example, which begins Dialogue 2 is reminiscent of "Reflections on a Flower Garden":

The next Morning, when Breakfast was over, Theron and Aspasio took a Walk into the Garden--Their Spirits cheered [sic], and their Imaginations lively--Gratitude glowing in their Hearts, and the whole Creation smiling around them.

The Spot adjoining to the House, was appropriated to the Cultivation of Flowers.--In a Variety of handsome Compartments, were assembled the choicest Beauties of blooming Nature. Here, the Hyacinth hung her silken Bells, or the Lilies reared their silver Pyramids. There, stood the neat Narcissus, loosely attired in a Mantle of snowy Lustre; or the splendid Ranunculus wore a full-trimmed Suit of radiant Scarlet.<sup>3</sup>

He goes on in this manner to describe the rest of the garden and the surrounding landscape. Then Theron points out how the goodness of God is conspicuous throughout the whole scene. "See! Aspasio," he says appreciatively,

how all is calculated, to administer the highest Delight to Mankind.--Those Trees and Hedges, which skirt the Extremities of the Landschape [sic]; lessening by gentle Diminutions; appear like elegant Pictures in Miniature. Those, which occupy the nearer Situations, are a Set of noble Images; swelling upon the Eye, in full Proportion, and in a Variety of graceful Attitudes. Both of them ornamenting the several Apartments of our common Abode, with a Mixture of Delicacy and Grandeur.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Theron and Aspasio, I:xi.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., XIV.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 46.

Another example representative of his use of nature themes is found at the beginning of Dialogue 13. Few passages in the Meditations are more sententious than this excerpt:

At a Distance, were heard the Bleatings of the Flock, mingled with the Lowings of the milky Mothers. While more melodious Music, warbled from the neighbouring Boughs, and spoke aloud the Joy of their feathered Inhabitants.--And not only spoke their Joy, but spread an additional Charm over all the Landschaft [sic]. For, amidst such Strains of native Harmony, the breathing Perfumes smell more sweet; the streaming Rills shine more clear; and the universal Prospect looks more gay.<sup>1</sup>

At times there is a reversal of character. In Dialogue 15, for example, Theron has taken a serious turn and is interested only in the state of his own soul, so this time it is Aspasio who provides the interlude, and a lengthy one it is. For nearly half the dialogue he ranges through the whole of the animal and vegetable worlds, expatiating upon the goodness of God as reflected in the careful planning evident in creation.

Near the middle of the work is an entire dialogue devoted to a discussion of anatomy. It will be remembered that this subject was one of Hervey's favorites at the university. Now, in order to give his readers a further respite from theological controversy, he allows Theron to explain in some detail how each part of the body functions with the greatest economy, thus pointing to its divine design. The following passage, which is on the whole typical, shows that the novelty of his approach is perhaps more striking than his learning.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., II:233.

The Veins, either pervading, or lying parallel with, this fine transparent Coat, beautify the human Structure; those Parts especially, which are most conspicuous, and intended for public View. The pliant Wrist, and the taper Arm, they variegate with an Inlay of living Sapphire. They spread Vermilion over the Lips, and plant Roses in the Cheeks. While the Eye, tinged with glossy Jet, or sparkling with the Blue of Heaven, is fixed in an Orb of polished Crystal. Insomuch that the earthly Tabernacle exhibits the nicest Proportions, and richest Graces.<sup>1</sup>

In Dialogue 6 the morning conveniently proves unfit for walking outdoors in order that the setting may be transferred to the gallery and library of Theron's mansion. Here all the best pictures and books are to be found, and the study is provided with a telescope, microscopes, globes, and other paraphernalia calculated to appeal to the refined taste of Hervey's more fashionable readers.

Of the remaining dialogues, one is introduced with a discussion and heavy censure of the contemporary practice of duelling, and another with a description of the ruins of Babylon. For some mysterious reason Dialogue 10 plunges directly into the theological debate without a preliminary digression.

Hervey's transitions from his entertaining sketches to the theological discussions are not usually very natural nor very satisfactory. When Theron and Aspasio stroll, for instance, into a grove of evergreens, their admiration for the beauty of their surroundings has scarcely been uttered before Aspasio is led to remark that the grove

may not equal the Groves of annual Verdure, in Floridity of Dress; but it far exceeds them, in the Duration of its Ornaments. Ere long, yonder shewy Branches will be stript of their Holiday Clothes; whereas, these will retain their

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 189f.



Honours, when those are all Rags or Nakedness. Thus will it be with every Refuge for our poor, imperfect, sinful Souls; <sup>1</sup>excepting only the Righteousness of our LORD JESUS CHRIST.

At this point the dialogue turns exclusively to a consideration of theological matters. Some of the transitions are even more rapid than this. In Dialogue 13 the two gentlemen walk on the terrace. Both acknowledge that they are charmed with the beauty and magnificence of the view. But the scenery is quickly forgotten when Theron suddenly remarks: "How very different, Aspasio, is this delightful Appearance of Things, from your ill-favoured Doctrine of original Guilt, and original Depravity!"<sup>2</sup>

In fairness to Hervey it should be noted that these abrupt transitions are not entirely the fault of his style. He is dealing with two separate and distinct themes, natural and revealed theology, both of which had a place in his own theology but were not integrated. In the dialogues, likewise, they are never joined. Under these circumstances any transition which he could have made would have been in some measure unnatural.<sup>3</sup>

From the passages already quoted it will no doubt have been strikingly apparent that Hervey's style had improved but little since the publication of his Meditations. Some of his descriptive passages on nature themes are fully as florid as any in the earlier work. Even the theological discussion at times has a marked verbosity about it. A passage from the second dialogue will illustrate this point. Aspasio is speaking:

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., III:318f.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II:234

<sup>3</sup>See W. E. M. Brown, The Polished Shaft, p. 45.



Can We, then, lay too much Stress upon a Doctrine, so greatly momentous; upon a Privilege, so extensively beneficial?

Ther. When all this is proved, then for my Reply,  
Aspasio. Nay, then You shall have more than a Reply; I promise You my cordial Assent.

Asp. And if all this be incapable of Proof, I assure You, Theron, I will not solicit your Assent. Nay more, I will revoke and renounce my own.

Ther. At present, I believe, We must go in, and prepare for our Visitants. Some other Interview will give Us an Opportunity to canvass this Question more minutely.

Asp. Though I have never much inclination, even when there is the most Leisure, for Controversy; yet, if You insist upon it, I shall not absolutely refuse to engage in a Debate with my Theron. Because, He will come to the amicable Rencounter, without bringing angry Passions for his Second. --My Reasons will be impartially weighed, not artfully eluded, much less answered with Invective.--If some inadvertent Expression should drop from my Lips, He will not rigorously prosecute the Slip; nor aggravate an unguarded Sentence into the Crime of Heresy.--Candour will form his Judgment, and Good-nature dictate his Expressions.<sup>1</sup>

The over-all effect, however, is that the Dialogues are not quite as florid as the Meditations. When Hervey is grappling with a vital theological issue the discussion can become very plain and direct, as will be seen in some of the quotations in the following chapter.

In Theron and Aspasio Hervey faced a new problem which had not concerned him in writing the Meditations. He had to adapt his style to a second character, and the results are not all that might be desired. It would be difficult to distinguish between the speeches of Theron and Aspasio when they are talking on the same subject, particularly about nature. Hervey himself was

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<sup>1</sup>Theron and Aspasio, I:71f.

aware of this deficiency, and there is evidence that he tried to mold Theron into a more distinct personality. From one of his chosen critics, for example, he enquired: "Does Theron speak enough; or with such weight, and such a spice of the sal Atticus, as might suit his character?"<sup>1</sup> But he knew that he had not entirely succeeded in adapting his style to two characters, and in the preface apologized: "There is not, I am sensible, that peculiar Air and distinguishing Turn, which should mark and characterize each Speaker."<sup>2</sup>

This defect in style detracts little, however, from the importance of the role which Theron plays in the theological discussions. He is never a straw man. Shaftesbury had warned Christian apologists about the ineffectiveness of knocking down straw men.<sup>3</sup> Whether or not Hervey was consciously following Shaftesbury's advice, he was most careful to see that Theron raises all of the common criticisms of his doctrine. In the preface he declares that he had met with "no considerable Objection, which is not either expressly answered, or virtually refuted"<sup>4</sup> in the Dialogues. Some of them are proposed in the very words of his opponents, although these passages are not always clearly indicated. He did not see the necessity for setting them all in quotation marks, he states, because "the Man of Reading will have no Occasion for the Assistance of such an Index, and the Man of

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<sup>1</sup>Gen. Col. Let. 125.

<sup>2</sup>Theron and Aspasio, I:xii.

<sup>3</sup>W.E.M. Brown, op. cit., p. 13.

<sup>4</sup>Theron and Aspasio, I:xvii f.

Taste will probably discern them by the Singularity of the Style."<sup>1</sup>

When he reached a point midway through the Dialogues where he could no longer divide his material in such a way as to give Theron a significant part in the discussion, he eliminated the dialogue form altogether rather than suffer Theron to take the role of a mute. The two gentlemen part, and Aspasio presents his case by letter.

Of the twelve letters all except three are from Aspasio to Theron and provide an opportunity for Hervey to cite detailed proofs for his doctrine and to enumerate at length its benefits. The letters are nearly free from his usual literary adornments. Their style sometimes has the simplicity of his private letters and sometimes the pleading urgency of his sermons.

The first of Theron's three replies conveys the impression that his interest in natural theology has largely given way to a paramount concern for revealed truth. It is rather surprising, then, to find that his other letters are merely long descriptions of scenes from nature, free from all mention of theology. Perhaps Hervey felt that he could well afford to sacrifice a consistent mood on the part of his second character in the interest of the divertive sketches which he had reason to believe would be a determining factor in the influence of his work.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. xiii.

Theron and Aspasio was destined to be one of the most popular theological works of the eighteenth century. Although there was at that time a large demand for books on divinity,<sup>1</sup> few others ever attained a comparable popularity. Recommended by Hervey's fame as a religious devotional writer, the work undoubtedly found its way into the hands of many who would not ordinarily have been concerned with it.

Even before it came from the press many of his friends and literary followers had been writing to ask about its progress. ". . . you can scarcely imagine what inquiries are made after it," he wrote to one of his consultants. "It makes me rejoice with trembling."<sup>2</sup>

When it went on sale in the latter part of February, it found a ready market. In fact, it sold so well that early in March his bookseller informed him of its favorable reception and recommended that a new edition be started at once.<sup>3</sup> Hervey was pleased to have this early opportunity to make corrections in his work. Following its first publication he had received quite a number of letters, some of which approved and others of which disapproved his effort.<sup>4</sup> He paid careful attention to the criticisms of these newer correspondents. "I expect to receive

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<sup>1</sup>Cambridge History of English Literature, XI:334.

<sup>2</sup>Gen. Col. Let. 133.

<sup>3</sup>Letters to Lady F. Shirley, Let. 90.

<sup>4</sup>Gen. Col. Let. 138.



more Advantage from my Enemies, than my Friends," he said.

"The latter peruse with Partiality; the former will examine with Rigour."<sup>1</sup>

Most of the early criticism which he received seems to have been directed mainly against his doctrine of faith, and Hervey was forced to rethink carefully his position. He made several modifications, particularly in the sixteenth dialogue,<sup>2</sup> but claimed that his original opinion had not materially changed.<sup>3</sup> The process of again passing the manuscripts around to all of his friends took so long that the printer was delayed for a time, but in the latter part of the summer the third edition<sup>4</sup> and the last to be published during his lifetime was on sale to the public.

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<sup>1</sup>Letters to Lady F. Shirley, Let. 79.

<sup>2</sup>Infra, p.

<sup>3</sup>Gen. Col. Let. 148.

<sup>4</sup>Considerable confusion has existed as to the size and numbering of these editions. Cole stated that "three editions were sold in the first year; the impression of the first edition consisted of five thousand seven hundred and fifty copies." (Herveyana, Part I, p. 66.) Tyerman concurred. "The first edition of 'Theron and Aspasio,' as already stated, consisted of nearly six thousand copies; and the second of four thousand; and yet, within nine months from the time when the work was first published, a third edition issued from the press." (The Oxford Methodists, p. 304.) These statements are clearly wrong! What does appear to have happened is that the two sizes, octavo and duodecimo, which were published together in February were counted as two editions. A new revised edition was issued during the late summer and was called the third edition. Thus a second edition in the proper sense of the word never appeared at all. Moreover, the first edition did not consist of nearly 6000 copies but probably of about half that number. It was the third edition which comprised 4000 copies, and this was the last to be published before Hervey's death.

This conclusion is based upon the following evidence. These two sizes are sometimes referred to as editions in Hervey's

The London Magazine was the first of the literary publications to take notice of Theron and Aspasio. Its February number quoted an extract nearly two pages long, referred to the

letters. On November 23, 1754, he wrote to Ryland offering to send him a large set of the work. "Though I cannot fix a time," he said; "I know not when the larger sort will be completed. Methinks I would advise those who purchase the larger edition, to have it only half bound in blue covers, and not cut the edges. The paper seems to be remarkably large." (Letters to Ryland, No. 12.) On December 15th he wrote to Lady Frances Shirley that his bookseller could not publish the work before Christmas. "He stays for the larger Edition, which was begun later, and proceeds but slowly," said Hervey. (Letters to Lady F. Shirley, Let. 72.) The work was finally published on or about February 18th (Letters to Ryland, Let. 14.), and on March 8th Hervey wrote to Ryland: "We have begun another edition, and ventured to print three thousand." (Letters to Ryland, Let. 15.) On April 5th he informed Ryland that Rivington had decided to publish 4000 sets instead of the 3000 originally agreed upon. (Letters to Ryland, Let. 17.) In a letter to Cudworth on June 12th he wrote: "I wish you could borrow the larger Edition; to that the numeral References are made, as from that the new Edition is printing." (Letters to Cudworth, A Defence of Theron and Aspasio, p. 29.)

Finally, on September 20th he wrote to a friend: "I have sent you the third edition of Theron and Aspasio; you will observe, that I have made some alteration in dialogue XVI ..." (Gen. Col. Let. 148.) Other letters written during the intervening time show that the edition published was the same one which had been initiated in March, and that publication had been delayed by the revision of Dialogue 16. (Letters to Cudworth in A Defence of Theron and Aspasio, pp. 18, 27, and 31; Gen. Col. Let. 138.)

Several of Hervey's letters to Ryland require explanation, for they make it appear that a new edition was in preparation in 1757 and 1758. These have obviously been misdated. The year has probably been added later by the compiler, for Hervey was in the habit of putting incomplete dates on his letters to those with whom he corresponded frequently. Letter 28 (dated April 12, 1757) belongs after No. 17 (dated April 5, 1755) as the discussion of Romans VII in both letters shows. Letter 37 (dated April 15, 1758) is a continuation of this sequence. It also speaks of dividing Dialogue 16 into two parts, a topic discussed in his letter to Cudworth of April 22, 1755. (See A Defence of Theron and Aspasio, p. 23.) It should be dated April 15, 1755. Letter 32 (dated October 11, 1757) states: "The third edition of Theron and Aspasio has made its appearance: I have not heard with what acceptance from the public." This letter should be dated

work as an "elegant Performance," and remarked that it certainly abounded with "many striking beauties, peculiar to this polite and pious Writer."<sup>1</sup> Sizable extracts were also given by the magazine in both March and April. Hervey was pleased with these reviews and wrote to Ryland that he considered that he had been treated in a "respectful and honourable manner."<sup>2</sup>

October 11, 1755, because the third edition bears the date 1755. Letters 31 (dated September 21, 1757) and 54 (dated September 3, 1758) should both be dated 1754, because they clearly refer to the publication of the first volume of the first edition of Theron and Aspasio.

It was undoubtedly the wrong date on this last letter that led to the erroneous conclusion concerning the size of the first edition. Rivington informed Hervey in 1754 that he recommended publishing 5000 sets in the small size and 750 in large octavo. On July 8th, Hervey wrote for Ryland's opinion, saying that he felt that half that number would be better, as the work might not sell, and if a second edition were demanded, there would be an opportunity for corrections. On July 26th he wrote again, saying that he would take Ryland's advice with regard to the number of copies. (Letters to Ryland, Lets. 7 and 8.) The matter is thus left hanging in doubt, but the natural conclusion is that Hervey's fears were allayed and the full number published. However, if Letter 54 is moved to its rightful place and dated September 3, 1754, it shows plainly that this was not the case. It states: "I took your advice as to the number of copies to be printed, though some have thought I have proceeded injudiciously, because my bookseller offered to give me two hundred pounds, and fifty copies bound, lettered and gilt, for permission to print four thousand copies of the small, and seven hundred and fifty of the large octavo; but I must own, the hope of correcting and rendering the work less unworthy of the incomparable subjects in case Providence should command a second edition, outweighs with me all pecuniary considerations."

<sup>1</sup>24:51, February, 1755.

<sup>2</sup>Letters to Ryland, Let. 16.



The Gentleman's Magazine was not so charitable. Its March issue termed the work "a compendium and a defence of Calvinistic divinity" and especially censured Hervey's idea of vindictive justice for its unreasonableness. But it also remarked that the style was "in general more masculine, and the periods better turned" than in the Meditations.<sup>1</sup>

Hervey feared the worst from the critics of the Monthly Review.<sup>2</sup> He was not entirely disappointed, for the May number remarked that "a judicious and considerate reader, indeed, will not often find occasion to entertain a very high opinion of the author's judgment ...". At the same time, it acknowledged that the Dialogues had "all the marks of a benevolent, and well disposed mind, greatly concerned for the advancement of the interests of virtue and religion." "The descriptive part of the work," it found, was "in many places, entertaining and ingenious."<sup>3</sup>

The Edinburgh Review for 1755 also took notice of Theron and Aspasio. It disagreed with Hervey's view of the nature of faith, but in general it was sympathetic and expressed the opinion that "as the flowry imagination of the author must generally please; so the moral and religious improvement which he makes of all the beauties of nature, certainly deserves the highest praise." However, it warned imitators to "beware of mistaking the tinsel of a glittering style for the native beauty of imagination, or the froth of loose declamation for the manly spirit of eloquence."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>25:130, March, 1755.

<sup>2</sup>Letters to Ryland, Let. 17.

<sup>3</sup>12:384, May, 1755.

<sup>4</sup>No. 1:74f (1755).



The most interesting feature about all of these reviews is their attitude to Hervey's style. With the exception of the London Magazine they censured either his doctrine or his judgment, but none of them found anything ridiculous in his style. On the contrary, they were, in general, favorably disposed toward it.

If even those who disagreed with his theological tenets felt bound to acknowledge the attractive quality of his style, is there any wonder that within his own evangelical circle Theron and Aspasio was so popular? Not only among the Evangelicals, but also among the Calvinistic dissenters and the evangelical members of the Scottish churches it was highly regarded. It became one of the principal manuals on theology for the whole of the Calvinist faction of the evangelical movement in the eighteenth century. Whitefield prescribed it as one of the textbooks for the college which he was attempting to establish in Georgia.<sup>1</sup>

It was directly responsible for drawing several men into the Evangelicals. For example, both John Eyre,<sup>2</sup> the first editor of the Evangelical Magazine, and Thomas Robinson,<sup>3</sup> a Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, were first induced to join the Evangelicals by reading Theron and Aspasio. The author of the Life and Times of Selina Countess of Huntingdon has noted that in the catalogue of the library of Dr. Samuel Parr Theron and Aspasio was listed with the comment that it "was the delight

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<sup>1</sup>Tyerman, The Life of George Whitefield, II:583.

<sup>2</sup>Stoughton, Religion in England under Queen Anne and the Georges, II:332.

<sup>3</sup>Balleine, A History of the Evangelical Party in the Church of England, p. 120.

of Dr. Parr when a boy, and, for some time, was the model on which he endeavoured to form a style."<sup>1</sup>

For countless others Theron and Aspasio has served as a source of instruction and devotional inspiration. Several times in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it was reprinted, and Overton<sup>2</sup> noted in 1878 that nearly up until his day libraries of divinity were not complete without a set. That it has now completely lost favor is undoubtedly due much more to its outdated style than to its theological doctrine.

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<sup>1</sup>The Life and Times of Selina Countess of Huntingdon, I:190n. Parr's library of about 10,000 volumes was sold at auction in 1828. Although Parr detested the Evangelicals, the fact that his writings, like Hervey's, are today unreadable because of their prolixity is a point in support of the truth of Seymour's remark. See DNB, s. v. Parr, Samuel.

<sup>2</sup>Abbey and Overton, The English Church in the Eighteenth Century, II:172.

Hervey's theology was the typical moderate Calvinism of the early Evangelical. CHAPTER IV one of the characteristics that distinguished them from the Wesleyan fashion of the Evangelical Revival. The latter Revival drew its inspiration in

## THE THEOLOGY OF THERON AND ASPASIO

The task now at hand is to examine Hervey's doctrine as set forth in Theron and Aspasio. The florid style and sketches of nature may have been primarily responsible for popularizing the work, but it was the theology that involved him in controversy. In Theron and Aspasio it is not presented in a very systematic fashion. The key to his order of presentation is the gradual "conversion" of Theron, and in this process the same doctrines come up for repeated discussion in the dialogues between Theron and his friend Aspasio.

In order that Hervey's theological tenets may be understood in as clear a light as possible, they will be stripped of their ornamented setting and presented in a more condensed and systematized form than that in which they stand in the Dialogues. It has previously been shown that Aspasio represents Hervey's own theological position.<sup>1</sup> No doctrinal distinction, therefore, will be made between Hervey and Aspasio; quotations from Aspasio's speeches and letters will be freely used as those of Hervey himself. At times, especially when quoting from Theron as well as from Aspasio, the interests of continuity will be better served by attributing remarks to Aspasio himself, but even in these cases they are to be thought of as those of Hervey.

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<sup>1</sup>Supra., p. 71.

Hervey's theology was the typical moderate Calvinism of the early Evangelicals. This was one of the characteristics that distinguished them from the Wesleyan faction of the Evangelical Revival. The entire Revival drew its inspiration in large measure from the 17th century English Puritans.<sup>1</sup> and if 18th century deism and rationalism were the children of Puritan intellectualism,<sup>2</sup> the Revival was a child of the Puritan concern for spiritual religion. The Evangelicals, however, took their theology as well as their inspiration largely from the Puritans, but not without a change in emphasis. Puritan theologians had tended to be less systematic than the earlier Calvinists,<sup>3</sup> and had given a much more prominent place to soteriology.<sup>4</sup> The Evangelicals inherited both of these tendencies; they were even less systematic than the Puritans and more exclusively soteriological. They took over the Puritan emphasis upon total depravity, and the doctrines of justification, faith, and the work of the Holy Spirit; but they did not lay the same stress on the doctrine of the absolute sovereignty of God and only tacitly held election and reprobation.<sup>5</sup> Taking their cue from those Puritans such as John Owen and Richard Baxter who held to a conditional

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<sup>1</sup>Stoughton, Religion in England under Queen Anne and the Georges, II:93.

<sup>2</sup>H. G. Wood, "Puritanism," H.E.R.E.

<sup>3</sup>Bronkema, The Essence of Puritanism, p. 104.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 99.

<sup>5</sup>Overton, The Evangelical Revival in the Eighteenth Century, pp. 44 and 196.



covenant, the Evangelicals believed in preaching as though all depended on the human will.

Hervey shared the high regard which the Evangelicals had for these 17th century Calvinists. "The (the Puritans) were the soundest preachers, and I believe the truest followers of Jesus Christ,"<sup>1</sup> he wrote to a friend. He was especially drawn to them because of their attachment to the doctrine of imputed righteousness. "It runs through all their Theological Works," he observed, "and very eminently distinguishes them, from the Generality of our modern Treatises."<sup>2</sup>

Just how well read he was in these Puritan works and how directly they influenced Theron and Aspasio are questions not readily answered. His works abound with quotations from the poetical writings of Milton, but a single reference to Howe appears to be the only other indication that he made direct use of any of the writings of the leading Puritan theologians in the first edition of Theron and Aspasio. In the third edition he quotes from John Owen's Catechism in support of his view of faith and has a few citations of other works of Owen.<sup>3</sup> It may be, however, that he did not seriously interest himself in Owen's works until the revision for the third edition had begun, for as late as 1753 he had not even decided whether he wanted to borrow them from Ryland. "I cannot say I am very much versed in Dr.

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<sup>1</sup>Gen. Col. Let. 49.

<sup>2</sup>Theron and Aspasio, I:51.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 3rd edition, III:316. See II:269n and III:59n.

Owen's writings," he wrote. "I once set about reading his Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews; but his Dissertations and Annotations were so excessively prolix, that I could by no means retain them in my mind."<sup>1</sup>

He was, however, directly influenced by several of the evangelical Divines who stood in the Puritan tradition. He acknowledged that his views on faith had been shaped principally by Walter Marshall's Gospel Mystery of Sanctification and Ebenezer Erskine's sermons,<sup>2</sup> but he was also indebted to Thomas Boston's Fourfold State. In Theron and Aspasio he presented a description of the whole process of conversion borrowed from Boston's book.<sup>3</sup> Marshall had been profoundly influenced by Puritan theology, for he had been deeply disturbed by reading the works of Richard Baxter and in his efforts to obtain peace of mind had sought help from both the author and Thomas Goodwin.<sup>4</sup> Erskine and Boston were both original Marrow Men who had fought in the Scottish Church for the views contained in the Puritan treatise, The Marrow of Modern Divinity.

The covenant idea played a prominent part in the theology of Theron and Aspasio. It was common in Puritanism, and the works of Owen and the Marrow Men especially would have influenced Hervey in this direction. But he was also indebted directly to

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<sup>1</sup>Letters to Ryland, Let. 5.

<sup>2</sup>Gen. Col. Let. 139.

<sup>3</sup>Theron and Aspasio, II:38n.

<sup>4</sup>D.N.B., s.v. Marshall, Walter.

the Covenant Theology of the Continent.<sup>1</sup> In 1753 Ryland had presented him with a copy of Herman Witsius's De Oeconomia Foederum,<sup>2</sup> a work in which the Federalism of Holland had reached its final development. Hervey seems to have made considerable use of it in writing his Dialogues.<sup>3</sup> In footnotes he referred to Witsius as "one of the greatest human Authorities" and said that he would not hesitate to risk all his reputation upon the Oeconomia Foederum.<sup>4</sup>

It is worth noting, however, that although Hervey followed Witsius on the Covenant idea and on justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ, he did not follow him in his doctrine of faith nor in his treatment of election and effectual calling. Witsius had maintained the doctrine of double predestination and had emphasized his treatment of election and effectual calling by placing it before his chapters on faith and justification, a common practice of the scholastic period of Reformed theology.<sup>5</sup> Hervey, on the other hand, only mentioned

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<sup>1</sup>Of course, the Covenant Theology of Holland had roots in Puritanism as well as in German Reformed Theology. William Ames was a teacher of Cocceius. See "Covenant Theology" by William Adams Brown and "Evangelicalism" by James Stalker in H.E.R.E.

<sup>2</sup>Letters to Ryland, Let. 3.

<sup>3</sup>See e.g. Theron and Aspasio, I:70,102; II:39, 51, 64, 428, 453.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., I:102n; II:429n.

<sup>5</sup>Witsius, The Economy of the Covenants, I:114, 294.

election once in each of his three volumes of Theron and Aspasio, and each time only in the words of Scripture and without elaboration.<sup>1</sup> Neither did he discuss final perseverance, but it underlies the whole of his concept of justification. In a long footnote in the Meditations he had declared his steadfast belief in that doctrine.<sup>2</sup> In company with other Covenant theologians, however, he based his belief in final perseverance not upon predestination but upon the Covenant.<sup>3</sup>

In Theron and Aspasio Hervey has also indicated that he consulted the works of the supralapsarian Beza and those of Turretin, who gave the covenant idea a large place in his theology and maintained the doctrine of justification by imputed righteousness as well.<sup>4</sup>

Almost nothing in the theology of Theron and Aspasio can be said to be original, and Hervey had no desire to make any such contribution. "I do not pretend, nor do I wish, to write one new truth," he said to Ryland. "The utmost of my aims is, to represent old doctrines in a pleasing light, and dress them in a fashionable, or genteel manner."<sup>5</sup> The only thing that might be said to be theologically distinctive in the Dialogues

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<sup>1</sup>See Theron and Aspasio, I:136f.; II:17n; III:185.

<sup>2</sup>Works, I:391.

<sup>3</sup>See Brown, "Covenant Theology," H.E.R.E.

<sup>4</sup>Theron and Aspasio, II:152n, 171, 453n.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., Let. 4.



is the emphasis which Hervey gave to the doctrine of the imputation of Christ's righteousness. It forms the core of his whole system. Yet even here the doctrine itself was not new.

Tyerman has referred to Hervey's "peculiar views of what he called 'the imputed righteousness of Christ'"<sup>1</sup> and remarked that

his theory, that, the death of Christ bought the sinner's pardon, and the righteousness of Christ procured for the sinner the privileges and rights of justification; or, to speak more precisely, of adoption into the family of God, was a speculative distinction, without Scriptural authority, and pregnant with antinomian heresy.<sup>2</sup>

In contrast to this view the most recent writer on Hervey says that "in its Scriptural reasoning Theron and Aspasio is impressive, and was difficult to answer."<sup>3</sup> Neither of these viewpoints does justice to the facts. The truth lies somewhere between them.

On the one hand, the Scriptural reasoning is not particularly impressive, except perhaps in regard to the number of texts that Hervey marshalled in support of his argument. Many of them have been unduly strained in order that they might yield a meaning agreeable to his point. Even the friendly Edinburgh Review, although sympathetic to his principal doctrine, felt called upon to express regret that his zeal had led him

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<sup>1</sup>The Oxford Methodists, p. 294.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 298.

<sup>3</sup>W. E. M. Brown, The Polished Shaft, p. 42.

to press into the service of his argument almost all the passages both in the Old and New Testament, where any mention occurs of the righteousness of God; which cannot, on every occasion, be understood, without some violence, to signify the imputed righteousness of Christ.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, his views of imputed righteousness were not peculiar. As will be seen a little later Tyerman has not quite understood Hervey's position. Nevertheless, neither Hervey's actual views nor those attributed to him by Tyerman can be said to be foreign to either Lutheran or Reformed dogmatics. Both had a place in Reformation theology from the sixteenth century.

Hervey did not intend that Theron and Aspasio should be a complete system. That is obvious from the subtitle of the work: A Series of Dialogues and Letters on the Most Important and Interesting Subjects. He does not discuss the doctrines of God, the Church, or the Sacraments; only incidentally touches upon the doctrines of Scripture, the Person of Christ, and eschatology; and cautiously avoids election and reprobation. In the typical fashion of Eighteenth Century Evangelicalism he places his whole emphasis upon the depravity of man, and the soteriological doctrines of Christ's satisfaction, faith, justification, and sanctification.

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<sup>1</sup>N<sub>O</sub>. 1, p. 74 (1755).

### The Divine Law and Human Depravity

In the state of primitive innocency, says Hervey, man possessed a divine life, having knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness.<sup>1</sup> Religion and morality were written on his heart, and for him to act according to nature was to act according to the will of God.<sup>2</sup> No other religious or moral laws were given to Adam, therefore, than the single command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden.<sup>3</sup> From this he was to abstain as a seal of his subjection to God. Bliss and immortality were to be his reward for obedience; misery and death his punishment for violation.<sup>4</sup>

Adam "presumptuously"<sup>5</sup> violated this single prohibition and incurred the penalty; he became mortal.<sup>6</sup> His understanding was then clouded with ignorance; his passions and appetites became extravagant beyond reason; his love and veneration for the Creator were extinct. "In a Word," says Hervey, "the whole moral Frame was unhinged, disjointed, broken."<sup>7</sup>

But it was not Adam alone who incurred the penalty for his disobedience. By the terms of this first covenant all of his posterity are involved in his guilt, inherit a mortal, sinful nature, and become subject to eternal punishment.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Theron and Aspasio, II:125.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 115.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 124.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., I:79.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., II:124.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 126.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., I:79.

Even if it be controverted that all mankind share in Adam's guilt, said Hervey, it cannot be denied that all, by their own transgressions, have made Adam's sin their own.<sup>1</sup> This fact has been made obvious by the law, which God gave to fallen man.<sup>2</sup> The purpose of the law is not primarily to serve as a standard of conduct but rather to convince man of his sin and depravity.<sup>3</sup> It insists upon a complete and continual obedience in even the most minute details.<sup>4</sup> Thus it demonstrates beyond all doubt that no man is righteous, that all have fallen far short of their duty, and that in every life there is iniquity.<sup>5</sup> "Look where-ever We will," he contends,

We find Proofs of human Depravity; reigning uncontrouled [sic] in Some, making frequent Insurrection in All. It is written on our own Hearts, by the Pen of Experience; the Finger of Observation points it out, in the Practice of Others.--Even in the Practice of Those, who have been Saints of the First Rank, and of the highest Attainments.<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, it seemed obvious to him that if the Sermon on the Mount was just, there is no man who has not broken all God's commandments.<sup>7</sup> "This then is the State of our Nature," he declares:

The Image of the CREATOR is lost: Darkness is on the Understanding: Disorder in all the Affections.--In the Will, Enmity against GOD, the sovereign Good: Inability to all that is spiritual and heavenly: with a Propensity to whatever is sordid and earthly.--The whole Soul is deformed, distempered, rebellious.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., I:380.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II:22

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 297.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., II:306.



Having shown man his depravity, the law then performs a second important function: it pronounces a sentence of doom upon him.<sup>1</sup> Everlasting destruction is the penalty for breaking the law, and even the least deficiency renders the offender liable for the full penalty. Thus man is clearly beyond self-recovery. Only God can save him.

Hervey shows some uncertainty regarding the present validity of the original covenant with Adam. In the fifth dialogue he seems to take the traditional view that the covenant had been abolished, not indeed as to its demand for perfect obedience, but in so far as man can no longer be justified by conformity to it.<sup>2</sup> "For," he says,

in case We could perform every Jot and Tittle of the divine Law; offend in no Instance; fall short in no Degree; persevere to the very End; yet this would be no more than our present bounden Duty. Not the least Pittance of Merit could arise from all this. Much less could this be sufficient to expiate original Guilt, or remove the dreadful Entail of the primitive all-destroying Sin.<sup>3</sup>

Later, however, he speaks as if the first covenant had not been so abrogated. In the sixth dialogue he states:

... if You can carry your Righteousness to that Perfection, which may equal the Purity of the Law, and comport with the Majesty of the Lawgiver: then trust in it; let it be the Ground of your Confidence; and seek no better Foundation.<sup>4</sup>

Likewise, in the following dialogue he asserts that the whole tenor of revelation indicates two methods of justification: a perfect

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>2</sup>This is the view taken by Witsius (cf. The Economy of the Covenants, I:131) and also by Heppe (cf. Reformed Dogmatics, p.316.)

<sup>3</sup>Theron and Aspasio, I:219.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 313.

obedience to the law or the acceptance of a Surety who has fulfilled the law's demands. "You may choose either of the two," he says, "but no third is proposed or allowed."<sup>1</sup> Here he was more in agreement with Calvin<sup>2</sup> himself than with the later Federalists. Although there appears to be an inconsistency in Hervey's thought at this point, it is probably too academic to have troubled him much even if he had noticed it. His true sentiments are so much more appropriately expressed in the following remark:

How strange does it sound, at least in my Ears, for poor, miserable, guilty Creatures, to talk of intitling themselves to the Happiness of Heaven, by any Deeds of their own! When it is owing wholly to God's rich forbearing Mercy, that they are not transmitted to Hell: owing wholly to GOD's free preventing Grace, that they are enabled to think a good Thought.<sup>3</sup>

### The Satisfaction of Christ

Had God, in order to reconcile sinful man, set aside the demands of the law and cancelled the punishment due man for his transgressions, this would have violated the honor of his holy law and destroyed his eternal and inflexible justice, contended Hervey.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, had he executed the punishment on the offender, and condemned all mankind to everlasting destruction, the divine mercy would have been abrogated.<sup>5</sup> To preserve both

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 348.

<sup>2</sup>Insts. III:11:2.

<sup>3</sup>Theron and Aspasio, I:331.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 79.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 178f.

justice and mercy inviolate and yet rescue fallen man from his plight the Son of God volunteered to become a Mediator. The following plan was arranged in a covenant between the Father and the Son, and in the fulness of time it was executed:

The Second Person of the ever-blessed TRINITY unites the human Nature to the Divine; submits Himself to the Obligations of his People; and becomes responsible for all their Guilt. In this Capacity, He performs a perfect Obedience, and undergoes the Sentence of Death: makes a full Expiation of their Sins, and reestablishes their Title to Life.--By which means, the Law is satisfied; Justice is magnified; and the richest Grace exercised. Man enjoys a great Salvation, not to the Discredit of any, but to the unspeakable Glory of all, the divine Attributes.<sup>1</sup>

Hervey distinguished between Christ's active and passive obedience. To him the active obedience signified Christ's perfect compliance with the demands of the law, and the passive obedience meant the Atonement or Christ's sufferings and death. These concepts are also referred to throughout the Dialogues as the active and passive righteousness of Christ.

Christ, he says, fulfilled the law fully and completely. There is nothing in its sacred precepts which he did not perform.<sup>2</sup> His sanctity of soul, exemplary conduct, zeal for God, and good will to man were such as had been completely unknown before, and have been unequalled since.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the man Jesus by reason of his union with the Second Person of the Trinity must have an undeniable right to eternal life. He was under no necessity of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 80f.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II:317.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., III:60.

obeying the law in order to procure salvation for himself; therefore, all that he did in fulfillment of the law was performed for his people and not for himself.<sup>1</sup>

Christ not only fulfilled the law on man's behalf, but he was also surety for his people with regard to penal suffering. He was charged with all the sins of all believers in all ages and suffered the punishment which they deserved.<sup>2</sup> Theron objects that if Christ suffered in place of his people, then he must have suffered the same punishment which they would have had to undergo. This, he reminds Aspasio, is the endless displeasure of God.<sup>3</sup> Aspasio replies that although the sufferings of Christ were transient and temporal, from the standpoint of divine justice they were equivalent to the endless punishment of all believers. "Let the immense Dignity of the REDEEMER's Person, be weighed against the everlasting Duration of our Punishment," he said, "and it will counter-balance, if not preponderate. His Infinitude is surely parallel to their Eternity."<sup>4</sup>

Hervey discussed the death of Christ as a ransom and a sacrifice, on the one hand, and as the punishment which sinners deserve, on the other. Although he speaks of a ransom, this is not to be understood in the sense of the traditional "ransom" theory of the Atonement, for he held that the ransom was ~~not~~ paid to God himself, in order to make satisfaction to the divine law and the divine justice.<sup>5</sup> Theron asks if this does not mean that

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., I:240.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 172.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 169.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 175.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 83.



God is making satisfaction to himself, since Christ is properly God. Aspasio evades a direct answer to this question, but replies that Christ and his people are actually considered as one and the same person, so that their sins are punished in him. Although this may be beyond the understanding of man, he adds, it is sufficiently confirmed by Scripture.<sup>1</sup>

Hervey saw nothing unjust in the punishment of an innocent person for the offense of another provided the former had an absolute control over his own life and willingly substituted himself for the guilty, as Christ did.<sup>2</sup> On the contrary, if the sins of all believers were really imputed to Christ, it was just and righteous that he should become an object of his Father's wrath and receive the most rigorous punishment.<sup>3</sup> Hervey rejects the idea that God might have cancelled the sins of fallen man without a satisfaction. He insists that the vicarious sacrifice of Christ was absolutely necessary,<sup>4</sup> a position which had been predominant in Reformed theology from the beginning of the seventeenth century.<sup>5</sup>

Hervey nowhere mentions a limited Atonement. He holds, as all Calvinists did, that Christ's satisfaction was sufficient for all men, but he does not say that Christ died only for the elect. Neither does he say that Christ died for all men. He adopts the typical approach of the early Evangelicals, presenting

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 84-86.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 137.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 152.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 161f.

<sup>5</sup>Heppe, Reformed Dogmatics, p. 469.

the Gospel as a sufficient warrant for anyone to believe and be saved, while at the same time avoiding any question arising out of election and reprobation.

At two points, however, his zeal carries him almost into a doctrine of universal Atonement. In Dialogue 6 Aspasio assures Theron's son, Eugenio, that Christ died in his (Eugenio's) stead.<sup>1</sup> Likewise, in the soliloquy at the beginning of Dialogue 14 Theron says: "Aspasio urges me to fly, without any Delay, to the Covert of CHRIST's meritorious Obedience. This, He says, was wrought out, in my Name, and in my Stead ..."<sup>2</sup> Those of Hervey's opponents who held particular redemption were not slow to point out this "error."

#### Justification by Imputed Righteousness

Central in Hervey's theology was the doctrine of justification by imputed righteousness. He calls it "the very fundamental Article of the Gospel,"<sup>3</sup> and throughout the Dialogues offers in its support numerous quotations from the Old and New Testaments, the fathers, and the liturgy, articles, and homilies of the Church of England.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Theron and Aspasio, I:280.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II:315.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., I:56.

<sup>4</sup>The Evangelicals loved to cite the moderately Calvinistic articles and homilies as proof that they, rather than the more numerous Arminian clergy, were the true exponents of the Church's doctrine.

Aspasio defines justification as

an Act of GOD Almighty's Grace; whereby He acquits his People from Guilt, and accounts them righteous; for the Sale of CHRIST's Righteousness, which was wrought out for them, and is imputed to them.

"Two of your Terms want some further Explication," says Theron.

"What do You understand by CHRIST's Righteousness? And what is the Meaning of imputed?" Aspasio replies:

By CHRIST's Righteousness I understand, all the various Instances of his active and passive Obedience; springing from the perfect Holiness of his Heart; continued through the whole Progress of his Life; and extending to the very last Pang of his Death.--By the Word imputed I would signify, That this Righteousness, though performed by our LORD, is placed to our Account; is reckoned or adjudged by GOD as our own. Insomuch, that We may plead it, and rely on it, for the Pardon of our Sins; for Adoption into his Family; and for the Enjoyment of Life eternal.<sup>1</sup>

The satisfaction made by the death of Christ was not sufficient, he held, to obtain for the believer a full justification.<sup>2</sup> It was necessary that Christ should obey as well as suffer for the believer because there was a twofold character to justification; the two distinctive branches of the divine law, the penal and the preceptive, both required satisfaction.<sup>3</sup> Christ's sufferings were not sufficient to satisfy both branches of the law; therefore, they were not sufficient for justification. But when the active obedience is joined with the passive, he adds, together they meet all the demands of the law, and when imputed to the believer, give him both pardon from sin and a title to eternal life.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Theron and Aspasio, I:58f.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II:52.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 72f.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 54.

"But if CHRIST's perfect Obedience be accounted ours," objects Theron, "methinks, We should have no more Need of pardoning Mercy, than CHRIST himself."

"Yes," Aspasio replies, "because, before this Imputation, We were sunk in Guilt, and dead in Sins. Because, after it, We are defective in our Duty, and in many Things offend."<sup>1</sup> Although this answer may appear to ignore the whole force of Theron's argument, it does have relevance when considered in the light of Aspasio's contention that pardon and acceptance are distinct actions arising from the satisfaction of separate branches of the law.

According to Heppe, it was common for Reformed theologians to hold that the believer receives pardon for sins from the imputation of Christ's passive righteousness and is accepted into eternal life through the imputation of the active righteousness.<sup>2</sup> This formal distinction between active and passive righteousness was not made in the earlier stages of the Reformation,<sup>3</sup> but as early as 1581 the Leiden Synopsis clearly asserted;

There are two parts in justification: the imputation of passive righteousness or absolution of sins, and the imputation of active righteousness. By the former of these we are delivered from liability and condemnation, and exempted from eternal death. By the latter we are also deemed worthy of a reward and receive the right to eternal life and it is adjudged to us ...<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 71

<sup>2</sup>Heppe, Reformed Dogmatics, pp. 463 and 467.

<sup>3</sup>Hodge, Systematic Theology, III:149.

<sup>4</sup>XXXIII:8 as quoted in Heppe, op. cit., p. 551.



This explanation found wide acceptance, but not all theologians preferred to make such a fine distinction. Heppe quotes Wolleb, for example, as saying that he did not "consider active and passive obedience to be so different, that the full payment of the punishment consists in passive obedience alone."<sup>1</sup> Neither does Witsius make the distinction.

At the beginning of the Dialogues Hervey professed to side with this latter mentioned group. He denied that he split the merits of Christ and ascribed pardon to the passive righteousness and eternal life to the active. Although some, he said, may be satisfied with this way of stating the matter, he did not approve of it himself. "To distinguish between the active and passive Righteousness, I think, is not amiss," he states.

Because, this sets the Fulness of our LORD's Merit in the clearest Light; and gives the completest Honour to God's holy Law.--But to divide them into detached Portions, independent on each other, seems to be fansiful [sic], rather than judicious. For, had either Part of the mediatorial Obedience been wanting; I apprehend, neither Pardon, nor Acceptance, nor any spiritual Blessing, could have been vouchsafed to fallen Man.<sup>2</sup>

He adds that no matter how he happens to express himself, he never actually considered the two parts separately but always as "a grand and glorious Aggregate."

In spite of this assurance, however, and of the fact that he nowhere specifically attributes acceptance into eternal life to the imputation of active righteousness, it is difficult to reach any other conclusion than that he actually did hold to the more subtle distinction. For in Dialogue 10, where he

<sup>1</sup>op. cit., p. 467.

<sup>2</sup>Theron and Aspasio, I:69.

develops the doctrine more fully, he states that the sufferings of Christ were a complete satisfaction "with regard to the Penalty, not with regard to the Precept" of the law.<sup>1</sup> Conversely, it would seem to follow as a matter of course that the active obedience was a complete satisfaction with regard to the precept but not to the penalty. Perhaps it would be more accurate to take his earlier explanation as a protest, not against this more subtle distinction, but only against any attempt to separate the active and passive righteousness in Christ or their effects in the believer. This seems to be the point with which he was most concerned, for he raises it again in Dialogue 10. Aspasio has insisted that the Scriptures often make a distinction between being freed from the charge of guilt and being regarded as a righteous person.<sup>2</sup> "According to your Account them," remarks Theron,

it should be possible for a Man to have all his Sins done away, yet not attain to complete Justification. Which is as contrary to sound Sense, and true Divinity, as to imagine, that Crookedness may be removed, and the Object not become straight.

"No, Theron," replies Aspasio.

According to my Account, it is impossible, that the active and passive Obedience of our REDEEMER should be disjoined. To whomsoever the one is imputed, from Him the other is not withheld. They were undivided in CHRIST the illustrious Head, and they are undivided in their Application to his mystical Body. As CHRIST in suffering obeyed, and in obeying suffered; so, whoever receives CHRIST as an Atone-ment, receives Him also as a Righteousness.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., II:53.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 48ff.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 56.

In this light Hervey is seen to be contending only that the active and passive obedience of Christ were not separate or divisible manifestations in his life but only different aspects of the same actions.<sup>1</sup>

There are also points in his treatment of Christ's satisfaction in Dialogues 3 and 4 where he seems to attribute pardon of sins specifically to the imputation of passive obedience. He says, for example, that with his blood Christ "paid a Price" for which "our Freedom from every penal Evil is granted"<sup>2</sup> and that "the Effect of Atonement, is Pardon--The Means of obtaining it, are the Death of CHRIST."<sup>3</sup> As a proof, however, these statements are less definite than the one previously considered and must be accepted with much caution, for he several times also attributes to the Atonement all that he later ascribes to the whole of Christ's righteousness. Thus he says that "the Atonement of CHRIST" is "the Foundation of every Act of divine Goodness; and the Origin of every Blessing" given to sinners."<sup>4</sup> "The Death of CHRIST," he states in a footnote, "procured the Pardon and Acceptance of Believers, even before He came in the Flesh."<sup>5</sup> Christ's sufferings "redeemed Us from every Evil, and purchased for Us a Title to all Good";<sup>6</sup> his blood purchased not only pardon of sins but also "admittance into eternal Life" and "all the Benefits of the New Covenant."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>cf. Heppe, op. cit., p. 467.

<sup>2</sup>Theron and Aspasio, I:82.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 110.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 112.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 177.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 180f.

The apparent confusion which these statements introduce into his doctrine of justification is largely clarified in Dialogue 10 by the answer to Theron's question: "Does not the Scripture ascribe the Whole of our Salvation to the Death of CHRIST?"

"This Part of our LORD's meritorious Humiliation, is, by a very usual Figure, put for the Whole," replies Aspasio.

"The Death of CHRIST includes, not only his Sufferings, but his Obedience." "In like manner," he adds,

when the Scripture ascribes our Justification to the Death of CHRIST; We are not to think, that it would set aside, but imply his Obedience. It is not because his active Obedience has no Concern, in procuring the Blessing; but because his bitter Passion was the most conspicuous, and the completing Stage of his ever-glorious Undertaking.<sup>1</sup>

This manner of using the expression "the death of Christ" to mean both his active and passive obedience was accepted as Scriptural by Calvinists, and even Calvin himself used it freely in this sense.<sup>2</sup> But then Calvin also used more or less interchangeably the terms justification, reconciliation, remission of sins, imputation of Christ's righteousness, and acceptance into God's favor. He did not make the distinctions which Hervey made between the active and passive obedience or between pardon and acceptance.

In view of the lengths to which Hervey went to maintain these distinctions, he was at times too careless in his choice of terms. Although he defined Christ's satisfaction as including both suffering and obedience, the whole of his discussion

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., II:54f.

<sup>2</sup>Insts. II.16.5.



of it in Dialogues 3 and 4 is concerned solely with the suffering and death. This section is not well integrated with the rest of the work, where the major stress throughout is on the inadequacy of Christ's death for salvation and the necessity for the imputation of the whole of Christ's righteousness.

This same tendency is found in some of Hervey's references to justification. He clearly defined it as consisting of two parts, pardon from sin and an accounting as righteous, both of which are derived from the imputation of the whole of Christ's righteousness to the believer.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, in Dialogue 7 he speaks of justification as "having our Sins forgiven, and CHRIST's Righteousness imputed,"<sup>2</sup> and again in Dialogue 10 he states that it includes "a Remission of Sins" and "an Imputation of Righteousness,"<sup>3</sup> forms of expression, it may be noted, especially common among Lutheran theologians.<sup>4</sup>

He lists the effects of the imputation of Christ's righteousness as "Pardon of Sin, Justification of our Person, and the Sanctification of our Nature."<sup>5</sup> He also refers to "the Pardon that delivers from Hell, and the Justification that intitles to Heaven." The former, he explains, "does by no means constitute the latter; but is connected with it, as a Link in the same sacred Chain; or included in it, as Part of the same glorious Whole."<sup>6</sup> This seems like an exceptionally

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<sup>1</sup>Supra p. 102.

<sup>2</sup>Theron and Aspasio, I:358n.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., II:46.

<sup>4</sup>Hodge, op. cit., p. 161.

<sup>5</sup>Theron and Aspasio, II:70.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 51.

indefinite expression in a work whose main argument is based upon the distinction between the pardon of sin and the title to eternal life as the "two constituent Parts"<sup>1</sup> of justification. In view of some of these expressions it is not particularly surprising that Hervey should on occasion have been slightly midinterpreted, as he was, for instance, by Tyerman.<sup>2</sup>

The question that naturally arises from Hervey's presentation of this doctrine is what is the point of going to such lengths in an evangelical work like Theron and Aspasio to maintain a subtle distinction between the two parts of justification when every effort to consider them as divisible actions is repudiated? Hervey himself had raised substantially the same question early in the inquiry. "If People may be safe," asked Theron, "and their eternal Interests secure, without any Knowledge of these Particularities; why should you offer to puzzle their Heads, about a few unnecessary scholastic Terms,"

Aspasio admitted that he was "not very solicitous, as to the Credit, or the Use, of any particular Set of Phrases. Only let Men be humbled," he said, "as repenting Criminals, at the REDEEMER's Feet: Let them rely, as devoted Pensioners, on his precious Merits; and they are undoubtedly in the Way to a blissful Immortality." Yet Hervey felt that if he could give his readers a distinct explanation of the genius of the Gospel, it would "shed Light upon their Paths, and encourage them in their Journey ..."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>2</sup>Supra, p. 93.

<sup>3</sup>Theron and Aspasio, I:65f.

He acknowledges that before adopting the doctrine of imputation he had had many searchings of heart as to how much of a part the active righteousness of Christ played in justification. At first, he admits, he was inclined to believe in the death of Christ alone as the effective mediation. After much consideration, however, he decided to place his faith in the imputation of Christ's whole obedience. His reason for making this decision is interesting, as it seems hardly an adequate motivation for the zeal with which he contended for the doctrine. "Thus I reasoned with myself," he explains:

Though there is, undoubtedly, something to be said for the other Side of the Question; yet, this is evidently the safest Method. And, in an Affair of infinite Consequence, who would not prefer the safest Expedient?--Should the Righteousness of JESUS CHRIST be indispensably requisite, as a Wedding-garment; what will they do, when the great immortal KING appears, who have refused to accept it? Whereas, should it not prove so absolutely necessary, yet such a Dependence can never obstruct our Salvation. It can never be charged upon Us, as an Article of Contumacy or Perverseness, that We thought too meanly of our own, too magnificently of our LORD's Obedience. So that let the Die turn either Way, We are exposed to no Hazard.<sup>1</sup>

#### Appropriating Faith

Faith, too, was to Hervey a fundamental principle in the Gospel, but his doctrine of faith was grounded in his central belief in imputed righteousness. Therefore, faith meant for him faith in the imputed righteousness of Christ.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., II:460f.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., III:203.

The Puritan influence was too strong in Hervey for him to be content with a purely passive doctrine of faith. He insists that man has an essential part to play in justification; he must accept the benefits which Christ has fully purchased and freely offers to sinners.<sup>1</sup> For until the believer makes a personal application of Christ to himself, these benefits are of no value to him.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, Hervey was equally cautious lest he set forth a doctrine of faith that would imply that man is in any sense responsible for his own salvation. Nothing is required as a condition for participation in the benefits of the Gospel, he emphasized, except a sense of their worth, a conviction of need, and a willingness to receive them.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the sinner does not perform the act of faith by his own ability. Like every other good work it is a gift of God's grace and is produced in the heart by the operation of the Holy Spirit.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, it is his principal work.<sup>5</sup>

Hervey goes even further and rejects entirely the idea that faith is in any way meritorious in justification. Faith is a work exerted by the human mind, he declares, and no one can be justified by works.<sup>6</sup> Faith stands in direct opposition to all works whatever, "whether they be Works of the Law, or Works

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 289.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 278.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 201.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 356.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 325f.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., II:75.



of the Gospel; Exercises of the Heart, or Actions of the Life ..."<sup>1</sup> It is also often weak and, like every other work, always imperfect. Therefore, it is hardly a suitable foundation for justification. "Alas!" he cries. "To what afflicting Fears, to what grievous Despondency should I, for my Part, be perpetually liable, if my own Faith was the Ground of my Justification. Blessed by the FATHER of Mercies! We have a surer Support."<sup>2</sup>

It is not faith itself that justifies, he states, but rather Christ's righteousness, which faith apprehends. For faith is like a window which allows the rays of the sun to illuminate a whole room and yet is in no sense the cause of the light. It is merely the instrument which allows the righteousness of Christ, transmitted by grace, to illumine the whole soul.<sup>3</sup>

By faith the believer is united to Christ, and through this union the righteousness of Christ becomes his possession. Hervey devotes all of one letter in Theron and Aspasio to a discussion of this union. In the Bible, he says,

we are often told of Union with CHRIST. Believers are said to be in CHRIST, and to be one with CHRIST.--What is still higher, and implies a greater Degree of Nearness, They are Members of his Body, of his Flesh, and of his Bones.--And, which denotes the most intimate Connection imaginable, They that are joined to the LORD JESUS, are one Spirit with Him!<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., I:326.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II:92.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 76ff.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., III:230.

In amplifying this concept Hervey uses as similies the relationships between father and son, husband and wife, friend and friend, vine and branches, and head and members of the body. His concern is almost entirely with individual union; he has little understanding of corporate union. It is true that he once remarked:

The Head and the Members constitute one natural Body; CHRIST and his Church compose one mystical Body. What Kindness is done, what Injury is offered to the Members, the Head regards them done to itself.<sup>1</sup>

But this is the sole reference in his discussion of union with Christ, or for that matter in the whole of Theron and Aspasio, to the Church as the Body of Christ.

It is when Hervey comes to explain the manner in which faith receives Christ that his doctrine of faith becomes most distinctive. This personal application is accomplished by an act which would seem to be partly mental, partly emotional, although Hervey's description of its character is somewhat vague. He terms it "appropriation."<sup>2</sup> Thus true faith is for him "appropriating faith," and he defines it as

a real Persuasion, That the blessed JESUS has shed his Blood for me, and fulfilled all Righteousness in my stead: That, through this great Atonement and glorious Obedience, He has purchased, even for my sinful Soul, Reconciliation<sup>3</sup> with GOD, sanctifying Grace, and every spiritual Blessing.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 239.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 337.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 198.

This was assurance by the direct of faith. It was the doctrine of the Marrow Men, which was condemned by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1720 and again in 1722 on the grounds that it made assurance of the essence of faith, contrary to Scripture, and that it was Antinomian in the sense that it did not require a believer to forsake sin in order to come to Christ.<sup>1</sup>

In the first edition of Theron and Aspasio Hervey did not follow out the consequences of this doctrine of faith. Although he maintained that appropriation was necessary for a true faith, he did not hold that assurance of salvation was equally necessary. Many have a proper Scriptural faith, even though it is mixed with doubts.<sup>2</sup> There is "Faith, Assurance of Faith, and full Assurance of Faith," he states. "To have the first is necessary; to have the second, is delightful; to possess the last, is Heaven begun in the Heart."<sup>3</sup>

How it is possible for a true believer to confidently assert: "Christ is mine!" and yet not have an equal confidence that he is saved, Hervey does not explain. No doubt this ambiguity is partially explained by the fact that in his own life Hervey never had the certainty which he thought he should have. To a friend he confesses:

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<sup>1</sup>The Principal Acts of the General Assembly, 1720:Act.5; 1722:Act 7.

<sup>2</sup>Theron and Aspasio, III:337.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 338.

What I wrote concerning a firm faith in God's most precious promises, and an humble trust, that we are the objects of his tender love, is what I desire to feel, rather than what I actually experience.<sup>1</sup>

He sometimes worried about giving way to unbelief in his dying moments.<sup>2</sup> He was continually seeking a full assurance, and in Theron and Aspasio expressed the doubt whether anyone who does not aspire after it can be truly awakened.<sup>3</sup> It is significant that in the third edition of the Dialogues he accepts the logical consequences of his definition of faith and makes assurance essential to true faith. This will be seen in the following chapter.

In his doctrine of faith Hervey broke with the Federalism of the Continent. It is interesting that Witsius, whom Hervey so admired, severely criticizes as presumptuous the very doctrine of faith which Hervey adopted.<sup>4</sup> Witsius taught that saving faith was a very comprehensive idea, involving a change in the whole man and the activity of the whole soul toward God.<sup>5</sup> True believers must not boast of assurance until they have found in themselves infallible evidences of grace.<sup>6</sup> He warned:

All, and every one in particular, therefore, to whom the Gospel is preached, are not commanded directly to believe, that Christ died for them. For that is a falsehood: but are commanded to proceed in that method, I have now described:

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<sup>1</sup>Gen. Col. Let. 33. This letter is undated but appears to have been written shortly after the Meditations were published.

<sup>2</sup>See e.g. Gen. Col. Let. 207.

<sup>3</sup>Theron and Aspasio, III:349.

<sup>4</sup>op. cit., p. 350.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 337.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 350.



and not to take comfort to themselves from the death of Christ, before, having acknowledged their own misery, and renounced every thing but Christ, they have given themselves up sincerely to him.<sup>1</sup>

It is not to Federalism but to a movement within English Puritanism that this doctrine of "appropriating" faith held by the Evangelicals is to be traced. It was a development influenced, no doubt, by the rise of Cartesian subjectivism. Hervey himself adopted it from Marshall and the Marrow Men, Erskine and Boston. Both The Marrow of Modern Divinity and Marshall's Gospel Mystery of Sanctification, which maintain this doctrine of assurance by a direct act of faith, were of Puritan origin.

### Vital Holiness

Hervey anticipated a severe attack from the opponents of the doctrine of imputed righteousness and attempted to guard it against the charge that it had Antinomian and licentious consequences. For him this idea was fantastic, and the testimonies to the holiness of his own life are ample evidence that his belief never had any such perverse influence upon him. If justification by imputed righteousness was the central doctrine of his system, holiness was "the very central Blessing, to which all the others verge; in which they all terminate."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 318.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 185.

Theron objects to imputed righteousness. If that doctrine is once accepted, he declares, repentance, personal reformation, and inherent righteousness are rendered needless and may be dismissed. Soothed then with the thought that his righteousness has already been fully accomplished, may not the sinner say to his soul?

Soul, take thine Ease in the most indolent Security. All my carnal Appetites, indulge Yourselves without Restraint. Conscience, be under no Solitude to live soberly, righteously,<sup>1</sup> and godlily. For the Work is done; all done to my Hands.<sup>1</sup>

Aspasio replies that where the grace of God really operates on the heart it will always produce desirable results. The believer will from the new disposition of his nature and out of gratitude add to his faith works of righteousness.<sup>2</sup> "As for inherent rectitude," he continues,

how can that be rendered needless by imputed Righteousness? Is Health rendered insignificant, by the Abundance of our Riches? Does Ease become superfluous, through the Beauty of our Apparel?--Holiness is the Health of our Souls, and the Ease of our Minds. Whereas, ungovernable Passions create keener Anguish, than a Brood of Vipers gnawing our Bosoms. Inordinate Desires are a more intolerable Nuisance, than Swarms of Locusts infesting our Abodes. To regulate those, and to restrain these, can never be needless, till Comfort and Sorrow change their Properties; till the diabolical Nature becomes equally desirable with the Divine.<sup>3</sup>

Hervey admits that one who only speculates or disputes about the doctrine or assents to it entirely in an intellectual way may indeed abuse it. But whoever perverts it in so shame-

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., I:230.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 233.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., I:233.

fully a manner, he declares, "is a Witness against Himself, that He has neither Lot nor Portion in the inestimable Privilege."<sup>1</sup> Holiness, though not the cause of justification, is so necessary a qualification that without it no one can enter heaven.<sup>2</sup> At this point Theron inquires how the law can demand the payment of a debt which has already been paid by a Surety. Aspasio denies that it is the same debt. He explains:

We are no longer under a Necessity of obeying the Law, in order to establish our Justification, or lay the Foundation for our final Acceptance. We are nevertheless engaged, by several other indispensable [sic] Obligations, to regulate our Conversation according to those sacred Precepts.<sup>3</sup>

Such obedience, he adds, is the best proof of love to God and union with Christ and is the best method of glorifying God and winning others to the gospel.

Hervey held that holiness is also a factor in determining the future reward of believers. Although they are admitted into heaven solely because of Christ's righteousness imputed to them, they are rewarded at the final judgment with a proportion of happiness corresponding to the degree of sanctification to which they have attained.<sup>4</sup> All believers will continue to be sanctified in the future life until they reach a state of perfection,<sup>5</sup> yet it is obviously an initial advantage to perform all the good works possible in this life.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 231.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 235.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 242.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., II:300.

Arguing in forensic terms from an unsatisfactory doctrine of faith, Hervey had some difficulty in trying to explain away the charge of possible Antinomian consequences which he had thus raised against his own system. Although he was never able to give a very satisfactory answer, he had no hesitation in affirming what has always been Christian teaching - that an immoral life is inconsistent with a state of grace.

He originally planned to close Theron and Aspasio with one or two full dialogues on the nature, principles and progress of sanctification, followed by a description of the happy death of Aspasio, the true believer. This design was temporarily dropped when the size of the work swelled beyond his expectations and his health declined.<sup>1</sup> Even after the work was published, however, he continued to hope that he might add a fourth volume to complete the original plan. He proposed to follow in the main Marshall's Gospel Mystery of Sanctification. All during 1755 he worked on this supplement, but it is doubtful if he was ever able to carry it beyond the shorthand stage.<sup>2</sup>

When he wrote his recommendatory preface in November, 1756, for a new edition of Marshall's book, he was still hoping

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<sup>1</sup>Marshall, The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification, p. xiv., Hervey's recommendatory letter.

<sup>2</sup>See Gen. Col. Lets. 138, 139, 142. Also Letters to Ryland, Let. 48.



to finish the fourth volume in time. His failing health and the controversy in which he became involved prevented him from ever completing the project. Somehow he must have known that he would never live to finish it, for in the preface he expressed his desire that if his own treatise failed to appear, Marshall's book should stand as the fourth volume of Theron and Aspasio.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Marshall, loc. cit.

## CHAPTER V

### SANDERMAN'S ATTACK AND CUDWORTH'S DEFENSE

The controversy which was aroused by Theron and Agassiz was divided into two fairly well-defined phases, one concerned with the nature of faith, the other primarily with imputed righteousness. Robert Sandeman and William Cudworth were the principals in the debate. PART II John Wesley and Hervey himself were the main contenders in the dispute over imputed righteousness.

#### THE CONTROVERSY OVER THE NATURE OF SAVING FAITH

At the same time, the lines of battle were not sharply drawn. Cudworth took part in both phases. Wesley, before launching his own public attack against Hervey, supported him in the debate with Sandeman. He agreed with Hervey on faith, but not on imputed righteousness; Sandeman agreed with Hervey on imputed righteousness but not on faith.

The controversy over faith will be treated first because it was the first to become public. It began with Sandeman's attack upon Hervey's Dialogues in 1757. The roots of the other controversy went deeper, as will be seen in Part III, but Wesley's Preservative Against Unsettled Notions in Religion, which first brought it into the open, was not published until 1756.

#### The Third Edition of Theron and Agassiz

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of the third edition of Theron and Aspasio. It is imperative, therefore, that some attention be directed to this edition before proceeding with a consideration of the controversy proper.

Most of the letters which Hervey received following the publication of the Dialogues were concerned with his doctrine of faith. A number of them expressed approval, but others were frankly critical. Some of his opponents voiced objections to his concept of an immediate trust in Christ, insisting that previous repentance or change of heart must necessarily precede faith, and that seriousness, sensibility of need, and a real desire were prerequisites.<sup>1</sup>

Others objected that his faith included an unwarranted element of assurance. John Brine wrote that if by appropriation Hervey implied a knowledge of personal salvation, he could not but conclude it a mistake.<sup>2</sup> Richard Yate of Gattacre sent a number of critical observations.<sup>3</sup> Hervey also notes that he had received long letters on assurance of faith from Samuel Pike of London and Mrs. Dutton of Great Gransden.<sup>4</sup>

He rather welcomed the discussion that his work had incited. Many of his opinions on faith were still new, having been worked out in the writing of Theron and Aspasio, and his

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<sup>1</sup>Cudworth, Defence of Theron and Aspasio, p. xi. Also see Letters to Cudworth, op. cit., p. 20n.

<sup>2</sup>Hervey, Letters to Ryland, Let. 17.

<sup>3</sup>Gen. Col. Let. 138.

<sup>4</sup>Letters to Ryland, Let. 17.



mind was obviously not settled on the subject. To Yate he remarked:

I hope what I have written concerning faith, will occasion some calm and friendly debates; I want to have the subject sifted, cleared, and stated. I must own, I am strongly inclined to side with our reformers; I cannot but think they adhere to the simplicity of the gospel. Christ died for me, seems to be the faith preached and taught by the apostles.<sup>1</sup>

He admittedly owed his ideas on faith very largely to Marshall, Erskine, and Boston,<sup>2</sup> but his own experience had testified as to the value of the element of assurance. "When I depart from this precious truth, Assurance by the direct act of Faith, I fall into darkness and distress ..." he wrote.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, from the beginning he had had doubts about the manner in which the doctrine of faith had been presented in his Dialogues. In September, 1754, as the manuscript was nearing the final stages, he had asked Ryland: "Is the article of assurance wound up too tight?"<sup>4</sup> Now the question was raised anew, and as another edition was just beginning, Hervey expressed a desire to modify his treatment of faith in such a manner as to more firmly establish his own position without giving offense to those who were critical of his views on assurance.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Gen. Col. Let. 138.

<sup>2</sup>Supra., p. 89.

<sup>3</sup>Letters to Ryland, Let. 37. This letter should date 1755; see supra., p. 80n.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., Let. 54. This letter should date 1754; see supra., p. 80n.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., Let. 17.

About this same time Hervey first became acquainted with William Cudworth, minister of an independent congregation in Margaret Street, London, and formerly a preacher in Whitefield's connection. Upon reading Theron and Aspasio Cudworth discovered that he and Hervey were of nearly the same mind. He thereupon wrote, expressing his friendship in their common cause.<sup>1</sup> Hervey at once replied (April 15th, 1755), explained that several people were dissatisfied with his opinions on faith, and requested Cudworth to review Dialogue 16 for him.<sup>2</sup> A week later he sent two letters which he had received from critics. "I am not shaken in my own Opinion by these Attacks," he wrote, "but I should be glad to deliver it more clearly, and establish it more firmly, in another Edition."<sup>3</sup>

Cudworth took a genuine interest in the project, and shortly became one of Hervey's most trusted advisers. He sent remarks both on the letters which Hervey had sent him and on Dialogue 16 itself. For several weeks an active correspondence flowed between them as the third edition was made ready for the printer.

In the absence of Cudworth's letters his remarks, which Hervey so clearly endorsed, can only be reconstructed by inference from his other writings, but there can be little doubt as to

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<sup>1</sup>Letters to Cudworth, A Defence of Theron and Aspasio, p. 17n.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

what they were. Several years before, he had published a small tract entitled Some Reasons Against Making Use of Marks and Evidences<sup>1</sup> in which he had outlined his doctrine of faith. His main points were (1) that there is a sufficient warrant in Scripture for every sinner to believe that Christ died for him, (2) that true justification must involve a consciousness of it (and therefore assurance), and (3) that faith can only manifest itself by its own act. Concerning the third point, he held that the fruits of faith, or marks and evidences, as he called them, are proved genuine because they proceed from a true faith, and that reflection and reasoning upon them is no part of faith. He also adopted the peculiar, circuitous argument that these fruits of faith, when discerned to flow from a true faith, are the proper marks and evidences of it.

Cudworth was giving some thought to having the Marks and Evidences reprinted, and in October sent a copy to Hervey, who commented approvingly: "It refreshes my Spirit and comforts my Soul. I hope, when re-published, it will be attended with this blessed Effect to Multitudes of Readers."<sup>2</sup> This indicates that the doctrine of the Marks and Evidences was still that of Cudworth and that Hervey largely approved it.

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<sup>1</sup>Published in 1745 and republished as part of a compilation entitled Christ Alone Exalted in 1747.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 38.

Hervey discovered that his friend had made a great many enemies by the doctrine he had espoused, and suggested that in the interest of the sale of his Dialogues their collaboration should remain secret. "Don't you think, I beg of you, that am ashamed of your Friendship," he wrote. "God forbid! But as I have some Concern, and you have a greater Zeal, for these precious Doctrines, let us use the most probable Means to spread them."<sup>1</sup> One can well imagine that Cudworth found his zeal somewhat dampened at this request, but he apparently accepted it in good faith. There was no reason to question Hervey's sincerity. Moreover, Hervey was lending a favorable ear to what his friend had to say about faith. He assured Cudworth:

My only Aim, I trust is to find out the Truth as it is in JESUS; which, at present, I am convinced is with you. There is so much Clearness and Simplicity in your Doctrine, it is so suitable to the Goodness of GOD, and so eminently conducive to the Comfort, Recovery, and Happiness of a Sinner, that I cannot be perswaded [sic] to relinquish it.  
 . . . . .  
 Your Answers are so clear, so consistent,<sup>2</sup> so comfortable; they very much tend to establish my Mind.

The confirming evidence that Hervey had been won over to Cudworth's views is found in the third edition of Theron and Aspasio. Corrections were of a minor nature except in Dialogue 16. Here three major alterations were made. First, Hervey added several pages to bolster his argument that the Scriptures give sufficient warrant to any sinner to appropriate Christ.<sup>3</sup> After citing several Biblical passages in evidence he says:

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 25f.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Theron and Aspasio, 3rd ed., III:298-309 with 1st ed.



Only allow these Texts to be true; only allow the divine Speaker to be sincere and faithful; then We may boldly affirm; That any, that every poor Sinner is authorised to say, "GOD gives me his SON, to be my Covenant Surety. I take Him at his Word. The SURETY and all his Merits are mine."<sup>1</sup>

In the second place, several more pages of material were added to lend further support to Hervey's contention that appropriation is essential to faith.<sup>2</sup> He included quotations from John Owen and Professor Altingius of Heidelberg to show that his definition of faith was substantially the same as theirs, and appended a footnote listing forty-six other early reformers and British divines from Luther to Marshall, all of whom he claimed in support of the doctrine of appropriating faith.<sup>3</sup>

The third change made in Dialogue 16 was the most significant of all and shows the direct influence of William Cudworth upon Hervey's thought. Those statements in which Hervey had spoken of assurance as a non-essential part of faith were expurged. In place of his assertion that faith, assurance of faith, and full assurance of faith were all different,<sup>4</sup> he now admitted only two categories: faith and full assurance of faith. Faith and assurance were joined. "It is the Opinion of the best Critics, that the Sense of the latter is included in the former," he said.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Theron and Aspasio, 3rd ed., III:309.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Ibid., pp. 313-318 with the 1st ed.

<sup>3</sup>Theron and Aspasio, 3rd ed., III:315n.

<sup>4</sup>Supra., p. 114.

<sup>5</sup>Theron and Aspasio, 3rd ed., III:330.

He made it clear, however, that he still did not consider assurance as being free from doubts. "We only affirm," he stated,

that an appropriating Persuasion or Assurance, are [sic] necessary to the Being of Faith. This Assurance may be encumbered with Doubts, and may conflict with Fears. But still it is Assurance--real Assurance-- and proves itself to be such, by opposing and struggling with the contrary Principle.<sup>1</sup>

#### Sandeman's Letters on Theron and Aspasio

The discussion which had arisen over the views of faith set forth in Theron and Aspasio erupted into a public controversy with the appearance in 1757 of the Letters on Theron and Aspasio. This two-volume work of more than 500 pages was published pseudonymously in Edinburgh under the name Palaemon. It soon became known that the author was Robert Sandeman, son-in-law of John Glas and the most prominent elder (or pastor) of the Glasite churches in Scotland.

Glas had been deposed by the Church of Scotland in 1730 for teaching that there was no Scriptural authority for a national church or a national covenant.<sup>2</sup> He set up an independent communion whose governing principle was a return to the New Testament pattern of the church. Although his theology remained strongly Calvinistic, he referred every point of doctrine back to

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 331.

<sup>2</sup>H.E.R.E., s.v. Glasites.

the Bible for authentication and made several changes in the traditional doctrine. Undoubtedly the most important of his doctrinal innovations was his definition of faith as simply an intellectual assent to the truth that Christ died to save many.<sup>1</sup>

Sandeman added little to either the theology or principles of polity which he inherited from Glas, but his vigorous advocacy gave impetus to the Glasite movement and made it a significant force in the eighteenth century religious world. Largely because of his efforts the movement spread to England and America, where the churches were usually known as Sandemanian rather than Glasite.<sup>2</sup>

In April, 1755, Sandeman first read Theron and Aspasio.<sup>3</sup> He had approached it prepossessed in favor of anything that might have come from Hervey's pen. Previously he had read the Meditations and one of Hervey's published sermons, The Cross of Christ the Christian's Glory, and had been especially pleased with the zeal shown for imputed righteousness. Upon finding that this doctrine was to be the principal theme of Theron and Aspasio his appetite had been whetted, and he was gratified to find that Hervey had treated it so extensively and assiduously.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>D.N.B., s.v. Glas, John. This article also states that Glas rejected the doctrine of final perseverance, but this statement must be erroneous. A study of Sandeman's theology shows clearly that he held that those who fall away never had a true faith. As far as Glas is concerned, Hornsby does not mention any rejection of the doctrine. ("John Glas 1695-1773").

<sup>2</sup>D.N.B., s.v. Sandeman, Robert. Also see Hornsby, "John Glas 1695-1773" p. 74.

<sup>3</sup>Letters on Theron and Aspasio, II:309.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., I:1

His enjoyment was short-lived, however, for upon reaching the sixteenth dialogue he was struck with disappointment at Hervey's doctrine of faith. "Alas!" he exclaimed, "how is the fine gold become dim!"<sup>1</sup> Here was error that could not go unchallenged, and shortly he began to prepare his reply.

In contrast to Hervey's doctrine of "appropriating" faith Sandeman maintained that the true justifying faith is the bare persuasion of the truth that Christ died to save the ungodly. It is merely "believing the record, or crediting the testimony" of the gospel.<sup>2</sup> The main plea throughout the Letters is that for acceptance with God only this "one thing is needful."<sup>3</sup> The apostles, he said, used the word faith in the same sense that belief is used in ordinary discourse; there is no essential difference between believing the testimony of the Gospel and believing any ordinary testimony.<sup>4</sup> When a man once believes a testimony, he possesses a truth, which may be said to be his faith.<sup>5</sup> Saving faith is the belief of a saving fact.

Sandeman saw faith as determined according to God's eternal decrees and implanted in the conscience of the believer by the Holy Spirit working through Scripture.<sup>6</sup> He rejected the idea that the Holy Spirit influenced the believers in any way

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., II:36.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 105, 124.



apart from the inspired Word.<sup>1</sup> The Spirit acts as "the soul, sense, or meaning" of the words in which the Gospel is delivered,<sup>2</sup> so that no one comes to a knowledge of the truth of the Gospel in any other way than by hearing or reading the report of it in the Scriptures.<sup>3</sup>

Justification by a simple belief of the Gospel involves, according to Sandeman, no reasoning, willing, or doing on man's part. It is not a work of the mind in any form. It is entirely a Divine act in which man is surprised and overcome by the truth which forces its way into his conscience.<sup>4</sup>

Sandeman equated faith or believing with mere knowledge of the atonement and so far divorced it from human effort that he made no apparent distinction between the atonement itself and knowledge of the atonement. Thus, at times he spoke of "the bare persuasion of the truth" as alone "requisite to justification,"<sup>5</sup> "the simple belief of the gospel as the sole ground of hope,"<sup>6</sup> or "the simple belief of the truth, as the sole requisite to justification"<sup>7</sup>; while at other times he could with equal freedom say that "the atonement itself is the sole and all-sufficient requisite to justification,"<sup>8</sup> "the work finished by Christ on the cross" is the "only requisite to justification,"<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., I:51.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., I:122.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., II:206.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 187.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 223.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II:123.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., II:175, 191.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 101.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 180.

or "the work of Christ" is the "sole requisite to justification."<sup>1</sup> Sandeman's practice of speaking of these two concepts interchangeably without anywhere in his Letters specifically identifying them or defining their exact relationship produced considerable confusion in the minds of some of his opponents, particularly William Cudworth.

Although the Glasites claimed apostolic sanction for their doctrine of faith and were reluctant to admit any debt to the philosophers,<sup>2</sup> it is undoubtedly more than mere coincidence that their conception of faith as primarily intellectual should have been formulated at the very time when the rising tide of rationalism was beginning to engulf Eighteenth Century religious thought in Scotland. Their definition of faith bears a marked similarity to that of John Locke. Sandeman devoted five pages in his Letters to a critique of Locke's Reasonableness of Christianity, and, although his observations were mostly strictures on the work, he highly approved Locke's definition of faith.<sup>3</sup>

Sandeman's principle quarrel was not with Hervey, it soon becomes apparent, but rather with those to whom he referred as the "popular preachers." As examples of this group he named Walter Marshall, Thomas Boston, Ebenezer and Ralph Erskine, William Guthrie, Philip Doddridge, Isaac Watts, George Whitefield,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 178.

<sup>2</sup>See Ibid., I:259.

<sup>3</sup>See Ibid., pp. 363ff.

John Wesley, William Romaine, and William Cudworth;<sup>1</sup> but he intended that the designation should include all those

who seek to have credit and influence among the people, by resting our acceptance with God, not simply on what Christ hath done, but more or less on the use we make of him, the advance we make toward him, or some secret desire, wish, or sigh to do so; or on something we feel or do concerning him, by the assistance of some kind of grace or spirit; or lastly, on something we employ him to do, and suppose he is yet to do for us.<sup>2</sup>

Although he was shortly to change his mind,<sup>3</sup> in the first edition of his Letters Sandeman did not include Hervey among the popular preachers but expressed regret that the Dialogues should "in too many places, be tainted with their noxious influence."<sup>4</sup> It would, indeed, have been surprising had he found otherwise, considering that Hervey avowedly based his doctrine of faith on that of Marshall, Erskine, and Boston, and that he was a personal friend of the last six men named above.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., I:145, 381; II:235, 252, 255.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II:299n.

<sup>3</sup>In the appendix to the second edition of his Letters (March 1759) Sandeman acknowledged that the esteem which he had expressed for Hervey had been ill-founded. Not long after the first publication of the Letters he had read Hervey's three Fast Sermons, published in August, 1757, and had concluded from the strain of doctrine which he found in them that there was no reason to consider him as any different from the popular preachers. (Letters, II:307.)

<sup>4</sup>Letters on Theron and Aspasio, II:14.

Sandeman's criticism of the doctrine of "appropriating" faith was essentially threefold: (1) that it insisted on the belief of something which is not true until believed; (2) that it provided props for faith in the nature of motions of the heart and so really amounted to justification by human works; and (3) that it denied the comfort which rightfully belonged to the true believer.

however. In the first place, he said, the popular preachers took the promises of the gospel, which were made only to believers, and extended them to all without distinction.<sup>1</sup> It was true, he admitted, that they did not affirm directly to any particular individual that Christ died for him, but they would tell him that it was his duty to believe so and assure him that the truth of the belief would somehow become evident in the believing.<sup>2</sup>

"Hence we see," he added,

that, according to them, This is mine, or, This was done for me, is a truth whose evidence takes its rise from the pains that I take to believe it; or it is a proposition, which begins to deserve the name of truth when I begin to believe it, and not until then. This, I must say, is indeed a very strange and uncommon way of finding truth ...<sup>3</sup>

That Christ died for many is a truth established firm as a rock in Scripture, said Sandeman, but that he died "for me" is a point not so easily settled.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., I:34

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 19.



He did not see how it was possible to maintain this account of faith without holding a doctrine of universal atonement.<sup>1</sup> No preacher can be warranted in persuading every one to whom he preaches to believe that Christ died for him unless it is true that Christ died for all.<sup>2</sup> If it were true that Christ died for all, the difficulty would certainly be removed, and a very solid basis for appropriation would be afforded.<sup>3</sup> This, however, is not the case. The Scriptures nowhere affirm that Christ died for all; on the contrary, they foretell the final perdition of many, even among those who have heard the good news and received it with joy, persuaded that they were true believers.<sup>4</sup>

Hervey, he remarked, seemed to go even a step beyond the popular preachers in this respect, for Aspasio asserts to both Theron and Eugenio while they are yet unbelievers that Christ died for them,<sup>5</sup> something the popular preachers would not have done in so forthright a manner.<sup>6</sup>

Nevertheless, Sandeman was very reluctant to charge Hervey with advocating the doctrine of universal atonement. In such a case, he felt, something more than Christ's death must be responsible for effecting the salvation of those who are saved, and then all that Hervey had said about imputed righteousness would be without meaning.<sup>7</sup> "I will therefore consider this as

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 20f.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>5</sup>Supra., p. 101.

<sup>6</sup>Letters on Theron and Aspasio, I:37f.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 38f.

a fixed point in the procedure of my controversy with Aspasio," he stated: that "it should mean the same thing to say Christ died for any person, and that person shall be eternally saved."<sup>1</sup>

Secondly, Sandeman claimed that in their doctrine of appropriating faith the popular preachers taught a preliminary human righteousness as necessary for justification. In so doing they reversed the apostolic doctrine of faith. Whereas the apostles first proclaimed openly the truth of the Gospel and then by various exhortations nourished and confirmed believers in their faith, the popular preachers plied their hearers with these same exhortations before they had believed and thus encouraged them to work out their own justification by diligently striving after works of righteousness. What else can such a faith be when obtained, he asks, than a belief that because of their striving, they are more worthy of God's favor than others?<sup>2</sup>

He conceded that the popular preachers agreed with the apostles in asserting that justification is by faith and not works. However, when they came to explain the doctrine, they really held that works of love must precede faith. "But stay," he says,

I must not say they insist on the previous necessity of love; that would be too flat: They only insist on the necessity of the humility, esteem, desires, longings, and every thing that belongs to love, but its proper name.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II:76f.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 77f.

In order to avoid saying that more than faith is required for justification they divided faith into as many parts as required for their purposes. "Hence the faith of reliance, affiance, assurance, the act of flying, and the act of trusting, a believing application, appropriation, etc."<sup>1</sup> They even admit a concept similar to the apostolic faith under the title the assent of faith he observes. "But then it lies in so remote and so dark a corner, as scarcely to be seen."<sup>2</sup>

Hervey had been guilty of frequent use of expressions which could only be interpreted as teaching this justification by human righteousness, Sandeman remarked. In spite of obvious efforts to the contrary Theron is portrayed as advancing in righteousness all through the Dialogues. Although he is carefully divested of all "righteousness of his own," he must still be well provided with requisites: a conviction of need, a sense of the value of Christ's merits, and a willingness to receive them.<sup>3</sup> When faith seems to Theron out of his reach, Aspasio asks: "Are You sensible, That You need this immaculate and perfect Righteousness of our SAVIOUR?"<sup>4</sup> Theron replies in the affirmative, and Aspasio inquires further: "Do You earnestly desire this Righteousness?"<sup>5</sup> Upon finding that Theron has both need and desire Aspasio says:

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 15f. Also supra., p. 111.

<sup>4</sup>Theron and Aspasio, III:319. <sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 320.

Since You hunger after the Righteousness, and thirst for the Spirit, of the crucified holy JESUS, He himself has pronounced You blessed. He himself has engaged, You shall enjoy the Desire of your Soul; and not barely enjoy, but enjoy it abundantly ... Then be not, my dear Theron, be not faithless, but believing.<sup>1</sup>

Theron confesses that he cannot believe, and Aspasio consoles him by observing that it is no small advantage to be convinced of the inability to believe.<sup>2</sup>

Theron is so far advanced in righteousness, contends Sandeman, that Aspasio actually sees his title to eternal life clear even before he has exerted the act called faith. His righteousness, therefore, must lie in his diligence to obtain faith.<sup>3</sup> Furnished with all of his "requisites"--desires, longings, thirstings, a sense of need, etc.--he must finally perceive a difference between himself and others which gives him a special right to the promises of the Gospel. Thus the faith by which he is justified must be the persuasion of the reality of this difference.<sup>4</sup>

Sandeman complains that Aspasio often compliments and encourages Theron in his efforts to believe, extracting some hopeful sign from each objection, when actually he has no ground at all to suggest any favorable symptoms. It is not possible to tell merely from the disquiet produced in Theron's mind by a sense of guilt whether he will ultimately arrive at a saving

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 322.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 323. See Letters on Theron and Aspasio, I:7f. and 63f.

<sup>3</sup>Letters on Theron and Aspasio, II:20 and 87.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 17.



faith.<sup>1</sup> An apostle, instead of complimenting and encouraging, would simply have proclaimed the truth to Theron. If he still did not believe, the apostle would have then declared the judgment of God against him and treated him as an unbeliever.

"But Aspasio certainly acts a very humane part," he chides, "in sympathizing with his friend, in the difficulty he finds to believe a proposition, whose truth or certainty must be made out by the pains taken to believe it."<sup>2</sup>

Sandeman's third objection to the popular doctrine was that in order to maintain the necessity for an appropriating faith the popular preachers were forced to deny the comfort which necessarily attends true faith and obedience. The two passages in the Dialogues which he thought deserved the greatest censure were of this nature.<sup>3</sup> One denied the comfort resulting from the simple belief of the Gospel. Theron and Aspasio had taken shelter in a summer house to protect themselves from a sudden rainstorm. Continuing their discussion, Aspasio compares the shelter of the summer house to the safety of Christ:

If this is a proper Emblem of CHRIST, to what shall we liken Faith? To a persuasion, that the Shelter of the Summerhouse is free for Our use? that We are welcome to avail Ourselves of the commodious Retreat? Would this defend Us from the Inclemencies of the Weather? Would

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 19 and 25.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., I:49; II:19.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., II:224.

Would this keep Us dry amidst the descending Deluge? would this bare Persuasion, unless reduced to Practice, be any Manner of Advantage to our Persons?--No. We must actually fly to the Shelter, and we must actually apply the SAVIOUR; otherwise, I<sup>1</sup> see not what Comfort or Benefit can be derived from either.

Comfort and joy necessarily attend the simple conviction of the truth of the Gospel, Sandeman declared. When a man first comes to recognize that there is a righteousness by which all who believe will be saved, he is bound<sup>1</sup> to find joy in believing.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the difficulty is not that he finds no comfort in the simple belief of the truth, but rather that he is too ready to conclude; upon finding himself a believer, that he is one of the elect.<sup>3</sup> The apostles called this kind of assurance the assurance of faith and distinguished it from the assurance of hope, which is given only to those who diligently work to obtain it.<sup>4</sup>

The other passage which Sandeman most severely condemned in Theron and Aspasio is one that denied the additional comfort which he claimed is given by the Holy Spirit to those who obey the Gospel. Aspasio is speaking against the practice of inferring assurance of justification from good works:

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<sup>1</sup>Theron and Aspasio, III:356.

<sup>2</sup>Letters on Theron and Aspasio, II:211.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., II:172.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 170f.

As to those, who are zealous Advocates for the reflex Act of Faith; who advise Us, to prove our Title to Comfort, by genuine Marks of Conversion; and teach Us, on this Column to fix the Capital of Assurance; I would rather propose a Question, than advance Objections.--Is not this somewhat like placing the Dome of a Cathedral upon the Stalk of a Tulip?<sup>1</sup>

In turn, Sandeman asks if this was not very like talking profanely against the work of the Holy Spirit as Comforter? It is by this very proof, he says, that men come to know that it was the genuine truth of God which they first believed and not a counterfeit, man-made truth.<sup>2</sup>

He rejected the contention of the popular doctrine that full assurance could be obtained by a direct act of faith. No man can be certain that he is one of the elect except in so far as he is freed from sin and led to do works of love.<sup>3</sup> If all faith were genuine and every man believed as he professed, then anyone who made a profession of his faith would be fully assured of his salvation. Unfortunately, this is not the case. It is possible to have a false faith, and even those who are engaged in the same works and profess the same principles may yet have far different motives. Therefore, every believer should examine himself to see if he be in the faith.<sup>4</sup>

The believer's own conscience is here the best judge of his real motives, but even it is by no means infallible and needs

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<sup>1</sup>Theron and Aspasio, III:368.

<sup>2</sup>Letters on Theron and Aspasio, II:218f.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 194.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 201f.

to be supported by other evidence,<sup>1</sup> for every believer is too favorably inclined toward himself to make a trustworthy evaluation.<sup>2</sup>

The additional confirmation comes from the Holy Spirit, who never fails to witness to the genuineness of the faith which issues in works of love. This He does by filling the true believer with such an abundance of the love of God that it leaves no room for anxious fears about falling short of eternal life.<sup>3</sup> From this witness the believer has the assurance of hope, which never comes merely by faith, but must be worked for "in the way of painful desire, attended with many fears," until the believer is perfected and crowned with enjoyment. But no sooner does a man sin than he loses the enjoyment of the Holy Spirit as Comforter.<sup>4</sup> The only way that he can again come to know his part in the atonement is by working "in the way of painful desire and fear," until he finds enjoyment again in the same way as he first did.<sup>5</sup>

Sandeman was inclined to take the view that all of the errors in Theron and Aspasio were due to the fact that Hervey's opinions on faith were still unsettled, and that he had unwarily imbibed false doctrine from the popular preachers.<sup>6</sup> He expressed the hope that "on a proper trial" Hervey's faith would

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 202f.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 203.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 209.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 172f.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 208.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., I:48.



"work itself clear of the ingredients that sink its value."<sup>1</sup>  
 In concluding his Letters he acknowledged that if it were necessary he could produce from the Dialogues many fine passages which were free from the influence of the popular doctrine.<sup>2</sup>

### The Correspondence Between Sandeman and Cudworth

Sandeman arranged for a set of his Letters to be sent to Hervey at Weston Favell. The latter immediately made inquiries as to the identity of the author, but none of his friends could help him. In a letter of August 6th (1757) he gave his appraisal of the work:

There are some strictures on my performance; but by far the greatest part of the book is very wide from this mark. Some things are truly excellent, and some animadversions upon me are perfectly just, but others (if I mistake not) are unfair and disingenuous. The manner of writing is by no means despicable, rather elegant and spirited, than course or dull. But there is such an implacable bitterness of spirit, and such an unchristian virulence of censure, against many of the best men that ever lived, and best authors that ever wrote, as much surprises and greatly offends me. I think I never saw a notion of faith more lax, nor an idea of grace more exalted, than in this book.<sup>3</sup>

He felt that the author had treated him unfairly by making it appear that he approved the whole of certain books which he had recommended only in part and by not consulting the third edition of Theron and Aspasio in the preparation of the Letters.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II:302.

<sup>3</sup>Gen. Col. Let. 190.

<sup>4</sup>Gen. Col. Let. 203. This letter should date 1757 instead of 1758, for it shows that Hervey did not yet know that Sandeman was the author of the Letters.

It had been some time since Hervey had corresponded with Cudworth, but on September 8th he wrote to ask if the latter had seen the Letters on Theron and Aspasio. He inquired as to Cudworth's general opinion of the work, and suggested that they have a personal interview to examine it in detail.<sup>1</sup> By the time this conference was held they had discovered the identity of the author, and Hervey requested that Cudworth write to Sandeman in an effort to clarify the points at issue.<sup>2</sup>

They admitted, however, the validity of Sandeman's criticism of certain expression which savored too much of justification by human righteousness. Hervey began another revision of the last three dialogues in order to correct these errors.<sup>3</sup> On February 22nd (1758) he wrote to Cudworth:

I hope it will not be long, before you give me your Company at Weston. Then we will examine the three Dialogues, as they appear in their new Form; and will consider, and determine, concerning their Publication.<sup>4</sup>

Hervey never completed this revision. He shortly became so immersed in his controversy with Wesley that he had no time for it. By Christmas he was dead.

To the second edition (1761) of his Defence of Theron and Aspasio Cudworth appended a list of some of the corrections which he said Hervey had intended to make had he lived to publish another edition.<sup>5</sup> All passages were to be altered "which might

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<sup>1</sup>Letters to Cudworth, Defence of Theron and Aspasio, p. 58.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 58n.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 59n.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 58f.

<sup>5</sup>pp. 270-280.

be understood, as making Thirstings, Awakenings, earnest Prayers, Sorrows, Tears, good desires, or Sense of Unworthiness, as the Encouragement for Confidence," he stated.<sup>1</sup>

The editions of Theron and Aspasio published after Hervey's death were revised according to this plan, and the sixteenth dialogue was divided into three, making nineteen dialogues in all. It is interesting to note, however, that the editors of Hervey's Works apparently did not accept this revision as authentic, for they have taken their copy from the third edition.

On December 22, 1757, Cudworth wrote a short letter to Sandeman and enclosed a copy of his Aphorisms Concerning the Assurance of Faith, a pamphlet which had been printed just before Sandeman's Letters were received and which consisted of a series of 59 aphorisms summarizing Cudworth's views on faith. It had been drawn up at the request of Hervey and had his hearty approval.<sup>2</sup> The views expressed in it did not vary enough from those in the Marks and Evidences<sup>3</sup> to warrant consideration, but Cudworth did state unequivocally that appropriation is more than a bare conviction of some truth. "It is a believing something, which I cannot discover in the word to be so, unless I so believe it."<sup>4</sup> he said.

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<sup>1</sup>p. 278.

<sup>2</sup>Letters to Cudworth, Defence of Theron and Aspasio, pp. 54f.

<sup>3</sup>Supra., 126.

<sup>4</sup>Cudworth, Aphorisms Concerning the Assurance of Faith, No. 7.

In his letter Cudworth invited Sandeman to debate their difference with him. He wrote:

I have perused your Letters, and highly esteem many things in them; but, I apprehend, when you published your Letters on Theron and Aspasio, you had not seen the enclosed Aphorisms, which has occasioned many wide mistakes in the nature of that appropriation Aspasio pleads for; it appears to me no more than resting our acceptance with God simply on what Christ has done; this is what we mean by the use we make of him; the desire, wish, or advance towards this, is the alone desire, wish, etc. which we plead for, and not some beginning of a change to the better, or some desire, however faint,<sup>1</sup> towards such a change, in order to our acceptance with God.

Sandeman replied that he had not previously seen the Aphorisms, but now that he had considered them, he still saw no reason to repent of his attack on appropriating faith. The Aphorisms, he said, contained the same doctrine as Theron and Aspasio, and he did not see the point of discussing the subject again unless some new evidence was offered. He observed that Cudworth did not seem to understand that every desire, wish, or advance which precedes faith is in its nature as truly self-righteous as any other work. He also challenged appropriation as being an indistinct concept which was neither the simple belief of a truth nor that love through which faith works. "Were I to think of an intelligible use for this term, agreeable to the Scriptures," he added, "I would say, that appropriation is wholly the business of love."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>New Evangelical Magazine, 9:74, March 1823.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 74ff.



given. Cudworth sent copies of this first exchange of letters to Hervey, who expressed his pleasure that the point was being debated with Sandeman: "He seems to be an acute Person; and if there is a Flaw in our Cause, will be likely to discover it. But as far as I can judge, he has found no such Thing hitherto."<sup>1</sup> John Glas judged differently. He had been following the correspondence and now sent word to Sandeman that he had spent far too much time with Cudworth. The Letters, he said, "were a sufficient answer to all he had wrote or ever would be able to write."<sup>2</sup>

On February 25th Cudworth sent a second letter to Sandeman and enclosed a copy of the Marks and Evidences. He insisted that the appropriation for which he pleaded was sufficiently warranted in Scripture by the declaration that Christ came to save sinners. He said that he too rested his acceptance with God simply on what Christ has done, but contended that appropriation was entirely consistent with that persuasion and therefore not liable to Sandeman's criticisms. "What you style your capital point, I heartily agree with you in, and rejoice in your testimony," he wrote; "but to infer that because it is the sole requisite, it is neither given to be received, nor received as

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<sup>1</sup>Letters to Cudworth, Defence of Theron and Aspasio, p. 60.

<sup>2</sup>Morison, ed., Supplementary Volume of Letters and Documents, p. 11.

given, appears to me your capital mistake."<sup>1</sup> Nothing was more evident, he declared, than that a mere opinion about Christ comes far short of a reception or appropriation, and that until the latter was proved unscriptural, it would not be surrendered.

Sandeman replied that after reading the Marks and Evidences he was more convinced than ever that a wide difference of opinion separated them. Appropriation was right, he acknowledged, provided there was an indefinite grant of Christ to sinners. But no man had ever been able to demonstrate such a grant from Scripture.

He expressed a willingness to terminate the correspondence, having no desire for victory, and judging that Cudworth already had sufficient evidence to choose a side. He warned that if Cudworth had entered the correspondence with a view to delivering him from error, that was indeed a mistake, because he was a member of a church which was united on the very point wherein he differed from Cudworth and which readily excommunicated everyone who attempted to add to faith something more than the simple belief of the truth. "It behoved me to be easily prevailed on indeed," he added tartly,

If after carefully considering the doctrine of Marshall, Erskine, and the like, in their own writings, and censuring it so as I have done in the face of the public, I should now be disposed to retract what I have said, merely on hearing the same doctrine retailed to me at second hand, for it does not appear to me, that you have any more to say on the subject than they have taught you.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>New Evangelical Magazine, 9:103ff, April 1823.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 105ff.

Undaunted by this rebuff Cudworth was unwilling to allow the correspondence to drop. He felt strongly that Sandeman had hitherto failed to understand him. On May 15th he again wrote, saying that he desired to determine the real point of difference between them. He reiterated that he, the same as Sandeman, maintained the sole requisite for justification and insisted

that to receive the one thing needful as a free gift, can be no otherwise a something more, than a being persuaded of the truth, is something more than the truth, i.e. not any such something more, as is any contradiction to the sole requisite.<sup>1</sup>

He therefore had decided that the principle difference between them must be over the ground on which a believer can lay claim to Christ as his Saviour. He requested that Sandeman comment closely on his tract on Marks and Evidences, adding:

I can see nothing more than a mere verbal difference, between claiming an interest in Christ upon my performances of the conditions of my love and obedience, and claiming it in virtue of such marks discovered in me.<sup>2</sup>

Sandeman was losing his patience, and replied that he was weary of the dispute, as it appeared to be fruitless. He rejected Cudworth's contention that their real disagreement was about the ground of a claim to Christ. Even in the full assurance of faith, he said, the Gospel report did not warrant him to make any claim at all upon God; he was entirely at mercy.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 137ff, May.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>New Evangelical Magazine, 9:140ff, May 1823.

He begged a truce at least until Cudworth had read his correspondence with Samuel Pike, which was soon to be printed.<sup>1</sup>

Two or three other letters followed, but they were not included when the correspondence was printed in the New Evangelical Magazine, probably because they added nothing new to what had become by now a useless wrangle. The editor notes that one of these letters was a very long one by Cudworth, and that it later constituted part of his published Defence of Theron and Aspasio.<sup>2</sup>

This correspondence has been examined at some length because it throws into clearer relief than either the Letters of Sandeman or the Defence of Cudworth one of the important issues between the two theologians. Cudworth, although claiming that he was misunderstood, was himself actually the one who misunderstood. He failed completely to grasp what Sandeman meant by the "sole requisite." He based his arguments entirely on Sandeman's few expressions where the atonement was called the sole requisite to justification, and completely ignored all reference to the "belief of the truth" as the sole requisite. He himself held that belief or conviction was as fully a work of the mind as striving, thirsting, appropriation, or any other act, and he failed to take seriously Sandeman's main point that justification was by a God-given knowledge of the Gospel without human effort.

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<sup>1</sup>See Chapter VI.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 145.



It is not surprising then, that he had difficulty in understanding why Sandeman so sharply criticized appropriation as being something more than the "sole requisite" when belief was also something more than what Cudworth understood by that term. Cudworth had indeed put his finger on one of the weak points in Sandeman's theology, but he did not understand it well enough to criticize it effectively. Instead, he persisted in maintaining that on the "sole requisite" they were agreed.

For his part, Sandeman was puzzled as to why his opponent could not see the difference in their doctrine. This difference was clear enough to him, but he did not seem to be aware of the source of confusion between them. As a result, the correspondence was marked with a considerable amount of fruitless disputing. Sandeman obviously doubted Cudworth's sincerity in claiming that they were in agreement.

All of this correspondence was passed on to Hervey. Although extremely ill, he at least managed to read it. "I fully assent to your Opinion," he said approvingly.

Think you have proved the Warrant for a Sinner's Application of CHRIST very satisfactorily.--If I live, I should much desire a Copy of this your Correspondence; when you have revised and finished it. Or do you intend to print it?<sup>1</sup>

In less than a month Hervey had passed beyond the realm of controversy. This letter was the nearest he ever came to endorsing the book which Cudworth was to publish in his defense in little more than a year's time. There can be little doubt,

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<sup>1</sup>Letters to Cudworth, Defence of Theron and Aspasio, p. 65.

however, from the whole manner of their collaboration, that Cudworth had full authorization to deputize for Hervey in defending Theron and Aspasio.

### Cudworth's Defence of Theron and Aspasio

Cudworth's formal reply to Sandeman's Letters was published early in 1760 under the title A Defence of Theron and Aspasio. It appeared in almost the same form as that in which he had first submitted his observations to Hervey; that is, as a series of short comments upon numerous passages selected from the Letters. In order to show that the Defence was authorized by Hervey, Cudworth prefixed to it the correspondence which Hervey had sent him during their four years of acquaintance.

In his book Cudworth claimed that the substance of the doctrine pleaded for by Aspasio is

that God hath so given eternal Life in his Son, to guilty Sinners, as that they are fully warranted to receive Christ, or assure themselves of Salvation by Him alone, without waiting for any inward Motions, Feelings, or Desires, as<sup>1</sup> any Way requisite in Order to such a Reception or Assurance.

He acknowledged that they agreed to almost all of Sandeman's assertions, and stood corrected by some of them, particularly where Aspasio had cast any reflection on the belief of the report as a useless endeavour.<sup>2</sup> His primary concern in the Defence was to vindicate appropriation from the charge that

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<sup>1</sup>Defence of Theron and Aspasio, p. 86.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 90f.

it was not a part of true faith. It stands in no opposition to the belief of the report, he insisted, but belongs to the conscious possession and enjoyment of justifying righteousness.<sup>1</sup>

The belief of the report goes before appropriation and emboldens the sinner to put his trust in what Christ has done.<sup>2</sup>

He answered the charge that appropriation involved the belief of something not true until believed by stressing that quite apart from the question of universal or particular redemption there was in Scripture an indefinite grant of Christ's righteousness to the guilty which warrants each one to make a particular application to himself. "It is true," he admitted,

the Scripture "no where ascertains that Christ died for me in particular." But it allows, incites, and commands me a guilty sinner, without more, to believe on him, live by him, etc. Phrases evidently expressive of the Appropriation, Trust, or Confidence we plead for.<sup>3</sup>

He speaks of the door of the Kingdom of God being open for sinners and says that the Gospel authorizes every sinner to live by the Righteousness it reveals:

It is freely given to him, it is his in Right to possess and enjoy, as any Thing we are invited to partake of. It is therefore his to live upon, tho' not his in present Enjoyment. It is not presented to him, but in common with others who perish, rejecting it as insufficient; yet it is so really presented to him, that he is welcome to live by it, or avail himself of it as his own, without performing one Act, or obtain [sic] one Qualification to entitle him to it.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 95.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 110.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 100.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 129.

How near his views approached the doctrine of universal atonement can be seen from his reply to Sandeman's criticism that the grant of Christ to sinners taught by the popular preachers turns out to be a gift made to many who never benefit by it. Said Cudworth:

"And what of all that? Could there be no such Thing as Manna given to, or rain'd daily round the Camp of Israel, because some despised it, and longed for the Flesh-pots of Egypt?"<sup>1</sup>

In answer to the accusation that appropriation involved self-righteous works, Cudworth acknowledged that Sandeman had justly detected "pharisaic attempts"<sup>2</sup> in the Dialogues, but denied that either he or Hervey consciously followed the popular preachers in leading the guilty to seek after any feelings, desires, or motions as requisite to justification.<sup>3</sup> He said that Hervey had recognized the errors and had begun a correction of his work before he died.

At the same time, Cudworth declared that appropriation meant more than the mere passive conviction of the truth that Sandeman held to be faith. It is something active in consequence of such a conviction, and such expressions as receiving Christ, coming to Christ, believing on Christ, laying hold of Christ, or leaning on Christ were expression of activity which

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 151.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 219.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 91.



meant living by the sufficient righteousness of Christ. Appropriation, he insisted, has no existence in itself. It terminates in its object, and its sole purpose is to give a certainty of salvation by Christ alone. Therefore, it is as opposite to a preliminary human righteousness as the bare persuasion of Christ's sufficiency is.<sup>1</sup> He affirmed

that these Expressions of Activity "do not contribute their Quota" to our Justification, since we are justified by the Righteousness received, trusted, or leaned upon, and not by our Act. We are justified by what we receive, even as Palaemon will allow we are justified by what we believe.<sup>2</sup>

Here it will be seen that Cudworth still had not understood what Sandeman meant by the "sole requisite" and still continued to misrepresent his argument.

It was in reply to the charge that Hervey and the popular preachers denied the comfort which accompanied true faith and obedience that Cudworth assumed the offensive. He rejected Sandeman's concept of justification. A man is justified, he stated, only when he knows that the sufficient righteousness of Christ is given to him and that he is accepted by God.<sup>3</sup> The Scriptures do not separate justification from the consciousness of it; the former can no more be enjoyed without the latter than existence can be enjoyed without the consciousness of it. "If I perceive not my Justification, it is to me as if I was not justified."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 136ff.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 165f.

<sup>3</sup>Defence of Theron and Aspasio, p. 144.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 142.

Sandeman's faith, he challenged, could not give any comfort at all, because there could be no relief from fear without a certainty of righteousness.<sup>1</sup> A mere persuasion of the truth that Christ died to save his elect can give no comfort to one whose share in it remains only a possibility.<sup>2</sup>

A possibility, that I may be an Elect Person, cannot give Relief, because it may be ten to one it is not true. My Hope is only in Proportion, as I apprehend many, or few, to be elected; and after all, it is not, in fact, Christ's Righteousness that relieves me, but my conjectural or fond Hope of being one of the Elect.<sup>3</sup>

He did not see that his own position was as vulnerable to this latter objection as was Sandeman's.

Cudworth also strongly condemned Sandeman's method of obtaining full assurance from works. From his view that consciousness of justification is necessary to its existence this method of obtaining such consciousness by working for it "in painful Desire and Fear" seemed little else than justification by works.<sup>4</sup> The real question, he held, was whether any acts were to be performed by either the mind or body in order to arrive at the certainty of "our own particular Justification." Hervey and he said only an acceptance; Sandeman said as many as were required to demonstrate personal election.<sup>5</sup> "The Difference here between us," he observed,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 91.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 116.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 97f.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 168.

is, that with Palaemon, this is mine, this was done for me, is a Truth whose evidence takes its Rise only from a Discovery that I am distinguished from other Sinners by my Faith, Love, and self-denied Obedience. With us it is the Language of a Reception, Appropriation, Trust, or Confidence, grounded upon the Divine Declarations to Sinners for that Purpose.<sup>1</sup>

Hervey, he said, had rightly judged when he had insisted that the proof from works was like "placing the Dome of a Cathedral, upon the Stalk of a Tulip."<sup>2</sup> Surely the Holy Spirit proved a Comforter, not, as Sandeman had asserted, by bearing witness to works, but rather by "manifesting to us, guilty Sinners, the Things that are freely given of God; taking of the Things of Christ, and shewing them to us."<sup>3</sup>

Cudworth accused Sandeman of mistakes and misrepresentations,<sup>4</sup> but he was far more guilty of this than Sandeman. It has already been pointed out how he failed to grasp what Sandeman meant by the "sole requisite." In the Defence he still continued to insist that they were agreed on this point.<sup>5</sup>

He also failed to understand some of the criticisms which Sandeman had directed against passages portraying human efforts toward justification. For example, Sandeman had said:

My expectations were greatly raised by the beautiful and affecting description of the royal stag-chace, in Dialogue IX. till I saw that the application issued in Mr. Boston's faith; till I saw the sinner's relief described as coming to him by means of such conflicts and struggles as are represented above, in the case of the shipwrecked mariner, and not like that of the desperate stag, which comes by the royal clemency alone.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 110f.

<sup>2</sup>Supra, p. 141.

<sup>3</sup>Defence of Theron and Aspasio, p. 196.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 218.

<sup>5</sup>See Ibid., p. 96.

<sup>6</sup>Letters on Theron and Aspasio, II:89.

To this Cudworth replied:

Aspasio does not mean struggling to believe the Report, but struggling for that Rest, which comes in a Way they thought not of; that is, by the Report. The Reasons of the Soul-Struggles described, are Ignorance and Self-Righteousness, seeking other Methods of Relief than by the Declaration of eternal Life given in Christ; and it frequently proves, that after many useless Struggles in divers Ways, the Soul thus finds Rest.<sup>1</sup>

It is certainly true that Hervey devoted several pages to comparing the self-righteous efforts of man with the useless struggles of the stag. Sandeman was perfectly aware of this, and it is not what he was criticizing. What he did condemn was Hervey's final portrayal of the sinner, driven from every false refuge, coming at last to Christ, convinced of his sin, penitent, longing and thirsting for faith, which in due time and after further conflicts of the soul is wrought in him.<sup>2</sup> Cudworth took no notice of this ending at all, although it is difficult to understand how he could have missed Sandeman's meaning so completely.

Sometimes his arguments are unsound. For instance, he did not seem to see any distinction between works and a principle of works. Sandeman had commented that

he who maintains that we are justified only by faith, and at the same time affirms, with Aspasio, "that faith is a work exerted by the human mind," undoubtedly maintains, if he has any meaning to his words, that we are justified by a work exerted by the human mind.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Defence of Theron and Aspasio, p. 147.

<sup>2</sup>Theron and Aspasio, II:37.

<sup>3</sup>Letters on Theron and Aspasio, II:302n.



Cudworth answered:

May not Aspasio as readily retort, He who maintains that we are justified only by Faith, and at the same time affirms with Palaemon, "That Faith is a Principle of Life and Action," undoubtedly maintains, if he has any Meaning to his Words, that we are justified by a Principle of Life and Action? The Answer that retrieves him out of this Difficulty, will also serve us.<sup>1</sup>

The utter pointlessness of this argument cannot be dismissed, as the other examples might, merely on the grounds of a misunderstanding. It casts doubts on the acuteness of Cudworth's judgment. Certainly he was no match for Sandeman. His misinterpretations and unseasonable responses did much to weaken the force of his Defence.

#### Rebuttals.

The following year, 1761, Cudworth published a 50 page pamphlet entitled "The Polyglott or Hope of Eternal Life in which he gave in parallel columns the theological views of Hervey, Marshall, Glas, Sandeman, Wesley, Whitefield, Relly, and himself. They were in the form of quotations taken from various works of these men. In this pamphlet he moved even closer to a doctrine of universal atonement." "If the Question is put, For whom did Christ die, to give a Claim to Remission of Sin and eternal Life by his Death, or to be a Door of Access into the Holiest of all? The Answer is, For all Men," he asserted. However, he qualified this by adding that when the question is "whom did God

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<sup>1</sup>Defence of Theron and Aspasio, p. 218.

intend eventually and effectually to save thereby?" the answer is those "whom he brings to the Knowledge of the Truth, and keeps thro' Faith to eternal Salvation."<sup>1</sup>

Sandeman made no attempt to reply in full to Cudworth's arguments. In the appendix to the third edition of his Letters on Theron and Aspasio (July 1762) he took only brief notice of the Defence and the Polyglott. With particular reference to the latter he observed:

This author maintains such a universal grant of Christ, as warrants every hearer to appropriate; and it must be owned, he does it, in some respects, with more consistency than many others; for he maintains, that Christ gave himself a ransom even for all those of mankind who shall never be saved by him.<sup>2</sup>

Thus Sandeman abandoned his dispute with Cudworth. He had great respect for the doctrine of election and obviously felt that it was completely set aside by the "pitiful perversions of scripture" made by William Cudworth and others who held the same views.<sup>3</sup>

Cudworth's final rejoinder was a six-penny pamphlet entitled A Review of the Controversy Betwixt Palemon and Aspasio, in Answer to Mr. Sandeman's Appendix.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The Polyglott, p. 36n.

<sup>2</sup>Letters on Theron and Aspasio, II:354.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 357.

<sup>4</sup>This pamphlet has not been located, but it is advertised along with Cudworth's other works on the inside back cover of the second edition of his Marks and Evidences, published in 1777.

CHAPTER VI

SANDEMAN'S IMPACT ON SAMUEL PIKE AND THE LONDON CHURCH

The Sandeman-Pike correspondence, which Sandeman had commended to Cudworth,<sup>1</sup> was not published until late in 1759. It had, however, begun shortly after Cudworth had first written to Sandeman. Samuel Pike was the minister of an Independent congregation at the Three Cranes meeting house in London and a lecturer at Pinner's Hall. The influence which Sandeman had on Pike and others in Pike's church proved to be far more significant than his influence on Cudworth. This development will now be traced.

Soon after the publication of Sandeman's Letters on Theron and Aspasio they fell into the hands of several members of Pike's congregation and aroused considerable excitement. Curiosity led to Pike borrowing a set from a friend;<sup>2</sup> he read them with mixed feelings and decided to approach Sandeman directly.<sup>3</sup>

On January 17, 1758, he wrote his first letter to Sandeman requesting a distinct account of the real design behind the Letters. He acknowledged that they had given him occasion for much thought and had involved him in extended conversation with friends.<sup>4</sup> Some

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<sup>1</sup>See supra., p. 150.

<sup>2</sup>[Sandeman], An Epistolary Correspondence Between S.P. and R.S., p. 151.

<sup>3</sup>Wilson, History and Antiquities of Dissenting Churches in London, II:92.

<sup>4</sup>[Sandeman], An Epistolary Correspondence Between S.P. and R.S., p. 1.

of them thought that Sandeman designed to correct the errors of the popular preachers, while others felt that the purpose was to promote a real detestation of them. Some even felt that he might be trying to overturn Christianity itself by destroying the character of its best men. Pike himself was inclined to the view that the Letters were intended to be a sarcastical attack on the popular preachers, but he was not certain.<sup>1</sup> He acknowledged that Sandeman's work had afforded him clearer and more extensive views of both justification and faith. He thought that Sandeman had given a true description of faith as dependence on Christ alone, but he himself preferred to speak of it as a "hearty persuasion of Christ's fulness and freeness" instead of a "mere notional belief of the truth of the gospel."<sup>2</sup> Most of all, he condemned the spirit and language of the Letters.

Sandeman replied in a long letter, thanking Pike for the account of the reception of his Letters in London. He affirmed that he was completely in earnest from the beginning to the end of them and was not the least concerned about appearing to some as if he were trying to overthrow Christianity.<sup>3</sup>

From Pike's distinction of a "notional belief" and a "hearty persuasion" it did not appear to Sandeman that Pike either understood him or had any clear idea how faith justified the believer.<sup>4</sup> It was his opinion that every one who had a

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 2ff.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 6.



"just notion" of the Gospel was justified. He wrote:

... so soon as the work of Christ is understood the hearer is justified; his conscience is quited by what he hears Christ hath already done. If you ask what relieves him, he answers, he is relieved by his faith, that is, by his creed. If you ask<sup>1</sup> what is his creed, he talks to you only of Christ's work ...

He did not think that Pike understood the importance of the controversy or that he realised that it was as possible to be self-righteous in acts of the soul as in the performance of the law.<sup>2</sup>

On March 11th Pike wrote again. He was not convinced that there was such a great difference between Sandeman and the popular preachers as the former imagined. Both, he thought, preached the true doctrine of justification by free grace; both attempted to direct the believer to Christ alone for justification.<sup>3</sup> In order that he might see more clearly what this difference was, he asked Sandeman to give him a succinct account of how faith justifies the ungodly, and how a mere belief of the Gospel record could give peace to the conscience when the Gospel did not directly affirm the election of any particular individual.

To the question of how justifies Sandeman merely repeated what he had already said more than once in his Letters. He maintained that men were justified when God imputed righteousness to them and that the imputation took place at the moment when the revelation concerning this righteousness was believed by them.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

In explaining how the mere belief of the Gospel report gave peace of joy he went somewhat further into the matter than he had yet done. He had this to say:

Now if the nature and ground of this joy be enquired into, it will appear, that it does not proceed on any persuasion that I am a justified person; that righteousness is imputed unto me; or that there is any difference whatever betwixt me and others. It proceeds wholly on a new discovery of God. The sinner, to whom this discovery is made, is comforted in beholding God just, in justifying the ungodly, or in knowing that a righteousness sufficient for his acceptance is already finished. He sees now what he could never understand before, that without any work or endeavour on his part, he may be justified in the presence of the just God. And this is the very spring of his joy.<sup>1</sup>

This joy seems, according to Sandeman's explanation, to disappear as soon as the believer raises the question whether or not he is a true believer and a justified person? It is effective only as long as the question is suspended.

Sandeman apparently realized that he had not given an adequate answer to the question and in the end took refuge in the assertion that it was a point "which no man can effectually teach his neighbour."<sup>2</sup> Yet it was a point well understood among believers, he added.

Sandeman was becoming suspicious of Pike's motives. To what purpose was the correspondence? he asked. Although Pike had continued to stress a general agreement with his principles, it seemed to Sandeman that it was an agreement so broad that it included all of his opponents as well.<sup>3</sup> He expressed the opinion

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 45.

that Pike must have read his book very superficially and declared that unless a marked change occurred in one of them, further correspondence was a waste of time.<sup>1</sup>

In reply Pike confessed that his conception of faith had hitherto been somewhat confused. He now thought that he had a more distinct understanding of the subject and to prove it set down a detailed description of faith as he then understood it. This description shows that he had moved over considerably toward the Sandemanian position, but he still offered some objection to the definition of justifying faith as a "bare belief of the bare report of the Gospel." This phrase, he thought, was "very uncouth" and appeared "very offensive and dangerous," for it might be interpreted as meaning only a "speculative, notional, or dead faith." Despite his recent change of opinion he was still persuaded that he had "truly known and preached, trusted and loved the Lord Jesus Christ for many years."<sup>2</sup>

From Pike's description of faith Sandeman perceived that they were in near agreement and sent a long reply couched in friendlier terms than he had previously used. Nevertheless, he was far from satisfied with Pike's present position. In the first place, he did not see how Pike could really have changed his views on justifying faith unless he was ready and willing to acknowledge his former error and repent. He had seen no sign of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 47ff.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 51-58.

this.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, Sandeman suspected that there must be some defect or mistake in Pike's faith which led him to try to distinguish it from a "notional" faith.<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile, Pike's congregation was watching the controversy with interest and many of them received great satisfaction from Sandeman's replies.<sup>3</sup> Others became increasingly alarmed as Pike's new views began to be reflected in his sermons.

On September 16th (1758) Pike sent another short letter to Sandeman admitting that he was now ashamed of the manner in which he had previously been slighting the bare belief of the bare report of the Gospel. He was now convinced that they were agreed as to the main point of inquiry, but he still did not understand how a person could find any comfort in believing until he had an assurance of his own interest in Christ. He requested a more distinct account of the peace of mind which resulted from a simple belief of the truth, previous to this assurance of a personal interest.<sup>4</sup>

Sandeman waited four months before replying to this request for further information. Finally, in January he sent a long letter in which he expressed regret that he was unable to cast his thought in a new mold which would make them more easily understood. The comfort which accompanied the simple belief of the Gospel did

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 74ff.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 85.



not lie in the believer's thinking anything about himself or about any change he had undergone, Sandeman stated. Instead, it came entirely from thinking on the atonement of Christ.<sup>1</sup>

Unable to explain this comfort any more satisfactorily than he had previously done, Sandeman fell back upon two expedients - fear and denial. The best service that can be rendered to anyone who finds no relief or joy in the simple report of the Gospel, he asserted, was "to deal roundly and plainly with him as an enemy to God and the Gospel ..."<sup>2</sup> This outburst must have been disturbing to one like Pike who was already nearly convinced, yet seriously bothered by the problem he had raised.

Secondly, Sandeman in effect denied that the problem even existed. It would be better, he said, if believers always had a fear whether they belonged to Christ or not. Then they would be diligent in good works until love cast out their fear. As it was, everyone was too willing to conclude his estate good, and the real difficulty was how to awaken and keep alive this fear, not how to dispel it.<sup>3</sup> This may have been true within the Sandemanian societies, but the flood of opposition which Sandeman encountered on this point stands as a denial of the validity of this argument.

Before posting his letter Sandeman had received two sermons which Pike had published under the title Saving Grace, Sovereign Grace. "... By these two discourses you have stormed my heart and

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 101

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 99.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 111.

taken it,"<sup>1</sup> he added. As long as they were in agreement on the character of God, he did not see how they could disagree greatly on other points of doctrine. He nevertheless expressed himself dissatisfied with a portion of Pike's pamphlet.<sup>2</sup>

Pike's next letter has, for reasons unknown, been suppressed, but it is apparent from Sandeman's reply (March 24, 1759) that Pike wanted to know what was objectionable in his sermons.

Sandeman replied:

... when I found you still inclining to think that true believers might be found "among those who are carried away by the popular odious cry against absolute predestination," I was not a little shocked. You could not have alarmed me on a more sacred point.<sup>3</sup>

Pike had also pleaded again for Sandeman to withdraw some of his expressions of resentment against the popular preachers, but this Sandeman refused to do. "Now my bias cannot appear more censurable to you than yours does to me," he retorted. "For unless the Gospel be held forth in its proper opposition to the taste of the world, I must consider all that's said about it, as little other than so much religious canting to acquire a reputation for piety."<sup>4</sup>

The situation in which Pike now found himself was growing increasingly turbulent. Some of the members of his congregation at Three Cranes were becoming more and more dissatisfied with the new trend in doctrine and partially withdrew from his ministry.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 118.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 119.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 122.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 127.

Pike's sermons, Saving Grace, Sovereign Grace, added to the alarm. In an effort to pacify the opposition and carry them along with him Pike held several church meetings during the summer and autumn. To Sandeman he addressed a short letter in which he briefly described the controversy in which the church was involved and asked if Sandeman had anything to say to him in such a situation.<sup>1</sup> He was left to face the problem alone, however, for the letter was never answered.

It soon became clear to Pike that his opponents, instead of being reconciled to his views, were becoming more contentious. Finally, he decided that it was time that he found out who were his friends and who, his enemies. At a Church meeting on October 9, 1759, he asked the members of the congregation to signify individually whether they were satisfied with his preaching or not. But the question was overruled and the meeting adjourned for a fortnight in hopes that some agreement might be reached. During this interval William Fuller, one of the leaders of the opposition, published a pamphlet entitled Reflections on an Epistolary Correspondence Between S.P. and R.S., and fuel was added to the fire.<sup>2</sup>

Fuller's pamphlet was designed to show the dangerous tendencies of Sandeman's doctrine. The principle tenet, he said,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 132ff.

<sup>2</sup>Wilson, History and Antiquities of Dissenting Churches in London, II:94.

was both "false and dangerous."<sup>1</sup> It was dangerous because the simple belief of the truth instead of producing all the spiritual fruits would appear to inhibit them.<sup>2</sup> It was false because it excluded from faith any element of trust or reliance on Christ and because it gave no relief to the guilty conscience.

"Nothing," said Fuller, "can properly discharge the Conscience from guilt, or pacifie it, but a sense of pardon: and where that is obtain'd the Conscience is purged from guilt, and no where else."<sup>3</sup> The conscience could certainly be pacified by the bare belief of the Gospel if the believer could be brought to submit himself to Sandeman's authority, he admitted, or if the Atonement were universal in extent.<sup>4</sup> But if serious consideration be given to the fact that the Atonement is only for a determined number, in no way can a mere belief that there is an Atonement bring comfort. "Therefore if I conclude the safety of my State, upon the bare belief of the Gospel Report," he said, "the comfort arising from such a conclusion, must be insufficient, delusive, or an enthusiastick pleasure."<sup>5</sup>

Pike immediately set about preparing an answer to Fuller's pamphlet. It appeared toward the end of 1759 as an 87 page

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<sup>1</sup>[Fuller], Reflections on an Epistolary Correspondence Between S.P. and R.S., p. 6.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 12.



publication entitled Free Grace Indeed!<sup>1</sup> which the author distributed among the members of his congregation. He interpreted the Reflections as a direct attack on himself rather than on Sandeman and attempted to indicate his new principles.

The whole controversy, he felt, revolved around the single question:

Since the gospel does not proclaim an universal redemption or salvation, how can the report it brings to our ears, when believed, give peace to the conscience of any individual before he can discern some saving change in himself, or<sup>2</sup> some distinction for the better between himself and another?

Pike had as yet failed to get a satisfactory answer to this question from Sandeman, but he nevertheless attempted to answer it. The essence of the reply was that "Jesus Christ in all his grace and fulness, is declared in the gospel for this very purpose, to appear as the only, the immediate and the sure foundation of a lost sinner's hope as such."<sup>3</sup> As to how this fact proved comforting, Pike was more than a little vague.

Aware that he had not really solved the problem but had merely restated the doctrine, he once again set down the objection and attempted to answer it. This time he simply begged the

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<sup>1</sup>An octavo edition. The duodecimo edition was dated 1760.

<sup>2</sup>Pike, Free Grace Indeed! p. 29.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 29.

question by contending that "unless there be a truth in this, the gospel cannot be accounted glad tidings of great joy to all people ..." <sup>1</sup> as it claims to be.

It is evident from Free Grace Indeed! that Pike still was far from full agreement with Sandeman at this stage. He insisted that he was pleading not for a speculative or historical faith, but for one in which the believer sees Christ and Christ's salvation as "entirely necessary for him, exactly suited to his case, and free for his use ..." "For whosoever does not see that the gospel-report points directly at him and at his own case," he contended, "cannot be said to apprehend the truth in its proper light." <sup>2</sup> He declared that he found something more than "a bare belief of particular redemption" necessary to pacify his conscience; he required a conviction that "the whole work of Christ is freely presented to sinners as such for their relief ..." <sup>3</sup> Sandeman would have most rigorously disagreed with him on this point, but Hervey and Cudworth would have found his sentiments congenial.

Pike had, however, adopted the Sandemanian principle that "every one who knows the truth does therefore love it ..." <sup>4</sup> He held that a right notion and belief of the Gospel would always produce spiritual fruits. His agreement with Sandeman on this

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

point was of considerable significance, for this principle was the rope of sand which bound together the whole Sandemanian doctrine of faith.

Matters had now been brought to such a state in Pike's church that further attempts at reconciliation seemed fruitless. Pike's supporters thought that a peaceful separation of the two factions would be the best solution possible in the circumstances. Accordingly, a congregational meeting was arranged for January 13th (1760) at which time members were asked to sign a paper renewing their union and approving Pike's ministry. Seventeen members signed; seventeen refrained.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile, Thomas Uffington, another of the leaders of the opposition against Pike, published a pamphlet called The Scripture Account of Justifying Faith. He contended for an inherent principle of grace implanted in the soul previous to faith, and declared that genuine repentance must precede true faith. It was impossible, he asserted, that only a perception or a notion of Christ could be a saving faith, for unbelievers could have "the clearest perceptions and the most just notions of his person and work ..." <sup>2</sup> and "multitudes who enjoy the gospel, and beyond all peradventure believe the report of Christ's death and resurrection, yet may perish for ever." <sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Wilson, History and Antiquities of Dissenting Churches in London, II:95.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted in [Dove], Rational Religion Distinguished From That which is Enthusiastic, p. 10.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

Uffington's tract was immediately answered by one of Pike's friends, John Dove, a tailor by profession and a religious controversialist of some fame. In a pamphlet entitled Rational Religion Distinguished From What Which is Enthusiastic he accused Uffington of fomenting the whole controversy in which their church had become embroiled. As far as Uffington's pamphlet was concerned, that seemed to Dove to be "a fruitless shuffle of fancies, without reason, method, or judgment."<sup>1</sup> He denied that the doctrine of an inherent principle of grace could be traced to Calvin and insisted that it made unnecessary any external revelation.<sup>2</sup> That nothing more is needed for salvation than the "naked faith" of the sinner was very plain, he thought. To suppose, as Uffington did, that unbelievers may have this faith as well as believers was to fail to understand the nature of it. In truth, he said, "the highest attainment the believer can arrive at in spiritual things, is only to have right ideas of the person and work of Christ: for indeed that includes the whole of christianity ..."<sup>3</sup>

Pike and his friends now determined to bring matters to a head. A church meeting was held on April 21, 1760 at which the question was moved and seconded: "That those who have not revived their union under the pastoral care of Mr. Samuel Pike be excluded the membership of the church." The congregation was again equally divided, seventeen votes on each side. Pike, having the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. xvi.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. xiif.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 10.



casting vote, gained the day. The opposition withdrew and formed a separate church in the meeting house in Little St. Helen's.<sup>1</sup> Those who were ejected published an account of the whole dispute in a pamphlet entitled The Case of the Excluded Part of the Church, while Pike gave his own interpretation of events in a similar tract called A Dispassionate Narrative.

On September 2nd (1760) Pike again wrote to Sandeman. It had been more than a year since his last letter had been sent, but he had still received no reply. He now enclosed a copy of the Dispassionate Narrative and asked Sandeman to point out to him with "the utmost freedom and faithfulness" where he was defective.<sup>2</sup>

Sandeman replied that the Narrative had tended to revive a mixture of tenderness and regret which he occasionally felt on Pike's behalf. He acknowledged that Pike had received very bad treatment from the hands of the opposition, but to Sandeman the real tragedy of the affair was that Pike had suffered so greatly to so little purpose.<sup>3</sup> Some value might have attached to the controversy, he thought, if the opponents had been treated as though they were bound for perdition and the truth had been

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<sup>1</sup>Wilson, History and Antiquities of Dissenting Churches in London, II:95.

<sup>2</sup>[Sandeman], An Epistolary Correspondence Between S.P. and R.S., pp. 135f.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 137f.

allowed to shine forth in all its glory. As it was, Pike's compromising attitude had so confused truth and error that his conduct was bound to be considered in much the same manner as if he had turned Arminian.<sup>1</sup> "For if a man is confident that he speaks for God," said Sandeman, "he must be confident at the same time, that however the opposition be managed, the devil is at the head of it."<sup>2</sup>

Pike attempted to justify his conduct in the dispute. He wrote that when objections had begun to be raised in his church to the new doctrines, he attempted to avoid all controversy because he hoped that in spite of the objections there might be a fundamental agreement at the bottom. "Accordingly," he explained

when any objections began to be occasionally started, I considered them as mere mistaken and misapprehensions of my meaning; being averse to the last degree from thinking otherwise concerning any of them, than that they knew the true grace of God ... I could not bear to think that any of them were really destitute of this true hope, or were building upon any false bottom. This persuasion in their favour I was determined to maintain as long as I could; which induced me to proceed in the way I have done, not a tenderness for my own reputation.<sup>3</sup>

He admitted that his actions had been more detrimental than helpful to the truth and stated that if he had it all to do over again, his conduct would be somewhat different.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, he still felt that it was a mistake to break the union of the church merely to maintain a strict uniformity in circumstantials.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 139.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 140.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 153.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 154.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 158f.

Sandeman did not trouble himself to answer this letter but terminated the correspondence with the following remark in a letter to a friend:

Make my compliments to Mr. Pike for his courteous letter of November 25, and let him know, that by what I learn from his letters and otherwise, he appears too much of a religious politician for me ...<sup>1</sup>

A pamphlet with the title Simple Truth Vindicated was also published in London in 1760 and is generally ascribed to Pike.<sup>2</sup> It was not a controversial piece; rather it consisted of a series of questions and answers on saving faith and its effects. If Pike really wrote the pamphlet himself, then it is apparent that he had changed his views considerably since the publication of Free Grace Indeed! only a year previously. For Simple Truth Vindicated maintains what would seem to be a full Sandemanian position. The author asserts that justifying faith is not a work of the mind but "no more than the divine testimony passively received";<sup>3</sup> that it is distinguished from a false faith only by the thing believed, not by the manner of believing;<sup>4</sup> that the Gospel report believed gives abundant ground for rejoicing, but that no one's personal salvation is declared in the truth which he believes;<sup>5</sup> and, finally, that true faith is a certain principle

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 159f.

<sup>2</sup>See D.N.B., s.v. Pike, Samuel; British Museum Catalogue, s.v. Pike, Samuel.

<sup>3</sup> Simple Truth Vindicated, pp. 40ff.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 57f.

of good works, so that no one can be assured of salvation until he finds that his faith produces good fruits.<sup>1</sup> Pike did join in full communion with the Sandeman church five years later, but it is at least open to question whether the change by 1760 was as complete as that reflected in this pamphlet.

The first edition of William Cudworth's Defence of Theron and Aspasio was published in 1760, as may be recalled from the preceding chapter. In an appendix to that book he inserted some remarks on both Simple Truth Vindicated and Free Grace Indeed!

Against the author of the former piece Cudworth reasserted his belief in appropriation and assurance. He admitted that no man's personal salvation was declared in the Scriptures, but insisted that there was a warrant there for the appropriation for which he and his friends contended. He acknowledged that there was a "Fear of Caution" which should be exercised until death, lest faith come not to fruition, but he held that this fear was in no way inconsistent with assurance. They did not plead for an assurance that their faith was genuine, he said. "It is enough that we are assured the Christ we believe and trust in, is genuine."<sup>2</sup>

Turning then to Free Grace Indeed! Cudworth quoted from it four pages of extracts which he acknowledged as his very own sentiments.<sup>3</sup> But he thought that Pike was unnecessarily afraid

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 54ff.

<sup>2</sup>Cudworth, Defence of Theron and Aspasio, 1st ed., pp. 198f.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 200ff.



of appropriation and assurance, which were the natural consequences of the simple belief that Pike had described so well.<sup>1</sup> It must be maintained, he said, "that there is a believing on Christ, as distinct from believing the Report of the Gospel, as putting our Trust in the Lord is distinct from knowing his Name."<sup>2</sup>

Sandeman and Pike, he declared, had tried to avoid the snare of a self-righteous justification by contending for only a passive reception of Christ's work rather than an active appropriation. This was a false distinction, for both were equally acts of the mind. There was no way to solve this problem "but by resolving the whole into WHAT WE RECEIVE, whether actively, passively, or rather both."<sup>3</sup> And to believe that Christ presents himself freely for salvation "can never be essentially the same Thing with believing on him, or trusting in him, as so presented."<sup>4</sup> Having now rather convincingly built up his case against the "simple belief of the truth" as a saving faith, Cudworth let the whole argument topple by immediately adding: "Tho! it is readily allowed, that none believe the Doctrine, but they believe on him according to it."<sup>5</sup>

In May or June, 1761,<sup>6</sup> John Greene, curate of Thurnscoe, published a six-penny pamphlet entitled Salvation By Grace But

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 207.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 210.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 214.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 211.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>6</sup>Gentleman's Magazine, 31:286 (1761).

Not Without Holiness, in which he joined in the censure of the doctrine of faith in Pike's Free Grace Indeed! The simple knowledge of the Divine righteousness, he declared, was not sufficient to give any comfort unless it produced good fruits. Unless the believers so knew Christ and so believed in him as to love and obey him, he had "neither Part nor Lot in him ..."<sup>1</sup> That faith for which salvation is promised in the Gospel, he continued, is of such a nature that it requires repentance followed by love and obedience to Christ. No one can be assured that his faith is genuine or ought to find any comfort in it until he finds these effects manifested in his life.<sup>2</sup>

Following the publication of Greene's tract, the controversy surrounding Samuel Pike subsided for a time, publicly at least. Early in 1764 Thomas Whitewood of Reading made a rather belated entry into the ranks of Pike's opponents by publishing a 100 page booklet which he called The Free Grace of God Displayed in the Hearts of His People. He was outspoken in his criticism of the doctrine of faith in Free Grace Indeed! Pike's idea that a simple notion or bare belief of the Gospel report was justifying and saving faith was, he declared, "in the most simple and bare sense of the terms a fleshly doctrine, and suited to the carnal minds of unregenerated souls, and particularly those of a libertine disposition ..."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Greene, Salvation By Grace But Not Without Holiness, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 28, 40f.

<sup>3</sup>Whitewood, The Free Grace of God Displayed, p. 2.

Pike's error, said Whitewood, lay in putting too much stress upon believing, whereas faith was never represented in the Scriptures or by any Calvinist as the cause of justification. It was rather a necessary effect or consequence of the soul being already justified "by eternal election and special redemption"<sup>1</sup> and was the means whereby this justification was made known. Faith necessarily implied a knowledge of the Gospel report, he said, but it was a mistake to equate them, for the report might be believed and yet have no saving effects at all.<sup>2</sup> He was not surprised to find that this kind of a superficial faith was too frequently combined with such legal and fleshly practices as the neglect of prayer, refusal to take civil oaths, the use of the holy kiss, and the practice of foot washing.<sup>3</sup>

Pike was extremely annoyed at Whitewood's remarks about foot washing, prayer, and the kiss of peace. He wrote to say that this charge against him and his people was utterly false and groundless and demanded that Whitewood should publicly retract his slanderous remarks.<sup>4</sup>

Whitewood refused. He observed that the remarks were of a promiscuous nature and that there was no necessity for Pike to apply them to himself or to any other specific person. It should be pointed out that in the strictest sense Whitewood was correct.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 3ff.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 63, 90.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 98.

<sup>4</sup>Pike, The Nature and Evidences of Saving Faith, p. 67.

He had placed these particular remarks about Church practices in a sentence introduced by an indefinite pronoun. But as Pike's church was mentioned both before and after these remarks in the same paragraph the inference was natural.

Meanwhile, Pike had come into difficulty over his Merchant's Lectures at Pinner's Hall. He had prepared a series of four lectures on "The Nature and Evidences of Saving Faith" for delivery in this lectureship. The doctrine of these addresses shows that he had now come into full Sandemanian views. He had delivered one lecture on December 27, 1763, and the second on January 10th. The two remaining lectures were scheduled for March and April, but the first two had caused such an uproar that the trustees dismissed him from the lectureship before he could complete the series.<sup>1</sup>

Pike thereupon published his four lectures and included an account of the expulsion proceedings. In a footnote he also printed the substance of his letter to Thomas Whitewood but did not mention Whitewood's reply.<sup>2</sup> This so angered Whitewood that in retaliation he immediately published a 36 page Letter to the Rev. Mr. Samuel Pike, Occasioned by His Very Unfair and Partial Publication of One to the Author Without Any Notice of His Reply to the Same. He repeated arguments which he had advanced in his private letter and further suggested that Pike should retract his charge of slander.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Pike, op. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 67n.

<sup>3</sup>pp. 2ff.



He also took the opportunity to make some additional comments upon Pike's doctrine of faith. He did not see how Pike could reject internal evidences and at the same time lay such stress on external duties when all genuine external religion was the result of an internal principle.<sup>1</sup> The weak point and great danger of Pike's faith, he said, lay in the want of an internal principle which led to evangelical obedience.<sup>2</sup>

With this publication the phase of the controversy centered about Samuel Pike drew to a close. On December 14, 1765, Pike severed his connection with the congregation at Three Cranes and joined in full communion with the Sandemanian Society at Bull and Mouth Street, St. Martin's le Grand. The following year he was made an elder, and in 1771 he went to Trowbridge in Wiltshire, where he ministered until his death two years later.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 16f.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>3</sup>D.N.B., s.v. Pike, Samuel.

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<sup>1</sup>Letters on Theism and Atheism, II:293.

<sup>2</sup>Works, I:306.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE EXTENSION OF THE CONTROVERSY OVER SAVING FAITH

In tracing the influence of Robert Sandeman upon Samuel Pike and his church in London it has been expedient to postpone consideration of the other writings which appeared during that time in the controversy over the nature of saving faith. Now, in order to view the wider aspects of the controversy, it is necessary to go back to the year 1757.

In November of that year John Wesley attacked Sandeman in a pamphlet entitled A Sufficient Answer to Letters to the Author of Theron and Aspasio in a Letter to the Author. This was the first piece to appear publicly in opposition to Sandeman's Letters. In a footnote near the end of his second volume Sandeman had half apologized to the "popular preachers" for ranking among them Wesley, who, he said, "may justly be reckoned one of the most virulent reproachers of that God whose character is drawn by the apostles, that this island has produced."<sup>1</sup>

Wesley's temper may be gauged from the speed of his reply. He accused Sandeman of "condemning the whole generation of God's children; sending all his opponents to hell at once; casting arrows, firebrands, death on every side!"<sup>2</sup> The pamphlet was mainly a defense of his friend Hervey and an attack upon

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<sup>1</sup>Letters on Theron and Aspasio, II:299n.

<sup>2</sup>Works, X:306.

Sandeman's doctrine of faith. The identification of the truth with faith did not seem to Wesley any more valid than equating the light which a man sees with his sight. "You yourself here teach another 'requisite to our acceptance, beside the bare work of Christ,!" he said, "viz. the knowing that work, the finding it true."<sup>1</sup> As for the saving power of the bare belief of the Gospel record, if that was true, "every devil in hell will be saved."<sup>2</sup>

To Sandeman it appeared that Wesley had been very angry when he wrote the pamphlet, although not without some provocation. But, he added, "as I cannot say that this writer has treated me with worse language than he had formerly done the God I profess to worship, I cannot decently have any personal quarrel with him."<sup>3</sup> He had therefore decided not to reply.

A reply was forthcoming, however, from the pen of John Dove, one of Samuel Pike's friends. In 1757 he published anonymously Remarks on the Reverend Mr. John Wesley's Sufficient Answer to the Author of the Letters on Theron and Aspasio. This pamphlet has not come to light, but from Sandeman's comments upon it in the appendix to the second edition of his Letters (1759) it appears to have been a spirited defense of Sandeman up to a point.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 303.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 302.

<sup>3</sup>Letters on Theron and Aspasio, II:350.

Said Sandeman: "... I apprehend the attentive reader will be at no loss to perceive, that his zeal and mine do not run altogether in the same channel."<sup>1</sup> The issues here were undoubtedly similar to those which separated Pike and Sandeman in the earlier part of their dispute and which were discussed in the last chapter.

Two other pamphlets appeared in opposition to the Letters on Theron and Aspasio before Sandeman published the second edition in March, 1759.<sup>2</sup> One was John Brine's Animadversions Upon the Letters on Theron and Aspasio, a 40 page work published in London in 1758. Brine was the pastor of the Particular Baptist congregation at Curriers's Hall, Cripplegate, and was generally reputed to be a high Calvinist and a supralapsarian.<sup>3</sup> He had been one of those through whose hands had passed the manuscript of Theron and Aspasio.

Of Sandeman's work Brine remarked: "Such is its Obscurity, that some have said, that, upon reading the whole Performance, they were not able to collect a single Idea from it."<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, he seemed to have little trouble in grasping the main

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 351.

<sup>2</sup>In 1758 a book was apparently published with a section called "A Detection of Some Ignorant and Rash Notions About Faith and Conscience, Thrown Out in a Late Book, Intituled, Letters on Theron and Aspasio," but, according to Sandeman, the author wrote to the publisher withdrawing his endorsement of the book. Letters on Theron and Aspasio, II:352.

<sup>3</sup>D.N.B., s.v. Brine, John. See also Wilson, History and Antiquities of Dissenting Churches in London, II:575.

<sup>4</sup>p. 1.



argument of it himself. Sandeman's great difference from those he opposed, observed Brine, was the supposition that love to the Gospel would automatically follow from a simple belief of it.<sup>1</sup> This supposition was completely groundless, for such a belief was no more than a "natural Faith."<sup>2</sup> As such it could never produce works pleasing to God, and it seemed to Brine that all the works which Sandeman insisted upon as a proof of true faith could be nothing else than "Socinian Obedience" yielded to a Divine law.<sup>3</sup> And he thought that Sandeman's resentment against the "popular preachers" was mainly due to the fact that they would not allow that mere morality was evangelical holiness.<sup>4</sup>

The other pamphlet was A Plain Account of Faith in Jesus Christ, published anonymously in London. The author was an advocate for universal redemption, holding that there was no reason for saying that Christ died only for believers, but that "Mercy and Pardon, are evidently promised to every Sinner, to engage him to forsake his wicked Way and unrighteous Thoughts."<sup>5</sup> Sandeman's simple assent to the truth of the Gospel record was certainly one thing needful, he said, but not the only thing.<sup>6</sup> The faith which the Scriptures speak of as justifying and saving includes not only such an assent but also a receiving of Christ

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>5</sup>p. 13.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 33, 38.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

as Saviour, Prophet, and Lord.<sup>1</sup> Only those who receive him truly believe in him, and only those who obey him truly receive him; for "they only are accepted of God and have Fellowships with him, who have forsaken the ways of Sin and begun to walk in the ways of Holiness ..."<sup>2</sup>

This was a sounder doctrine of faith than either Hervey or Sandeman had; but unfortunately the author did not seem to understand the issues of the controversy. He thought that Sandeman had misrepresented the popular preachers concerning appropriating faith. "This Appropriation," he said, "is the same with the Assurance of Hope, and cannot be said to be essential to Faith, but presupposes it."<sup>3</sup> It is one of the fruits which faith sometimes produces in believers. He did not seem to realize that the "appropriation" under discussion was maintained by Hervey, Cudworth, and their colleagues as the initial act of faith.

Sandeman was amused that Brine should have charged him with advocating works to the prejudice of faith, while at the same time the author of the Plain Account of Faith was charging him with advocating faith to the prejudice of works. "If these two gentlemen would read each other's performance, and then take another glance of the book they have been remarking on," he said, "though they should not come to like the book any better, they might learn to oppose it more pertinently."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 17f.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 19, 39.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>4</sup>Letters on Theron and Aspasio, p. 351. (Appendix)

In 1759 Theron and Aspasio again came under attack, this time not from the Sandemanians but from Joseph Bellamy of Bethlehem in New England, ardent disciple of Jonathan Edwards and enthusiastic proponent of the New Light theology.<sup>1</sup> Bellamy was known in his day as a vigorous foe of Antinomianism.<sup>2</sup> In a book called Letters and Dialogues Between Theron, Paulinus, and Aspasio he rather cleverly carried on the plan of Theron and Aspasio, introducing himself as Paulinus.

Theron is supposed to have gone to New England, there to have lost the joy which he first experienced upon conversion to Aspasio's faith. Seeking help from Paulinus, he is guided into the truth and shortly undergoes a "genuine" conversion. Theron's letters explain all of this to Aspasio, and the dialogues, which he also sends, give a detailed account of his conversations with Paulinus.

The subjects of Bellamy's three dialogues - love to God, justifying faith, and assurance of salvation - indicate the points at which he took issue with the doctrine set forth in Theron and Aspasio. He objected to Hervey's assumption that man's love to God was the response to God's previous love for man. This, to Bellamy, was not genuine love at all, but only man's self-love. God must be loved for "the perfection, goodness and excellency of

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<sup>1</sup>D.A.B., s.v. Bellamy, Joseph.

<sup>2</sup>Boardman, A History of New England Theology, p. 73.

his nature" alone.<sup>1</sup> Here the influence of Edward's theory of virtue can be clearly seen. During his conversion described in the latter part of the book, Theron lies prostrate upon the ground. God gradually appears to him as infinitely great, holy, and glorious, and the law appears as holy, just, and good. Before he is aware of what he is doing, he says within himself: "Let all heaven for ever love and adore the infinitely glorious Majesty, although I receive my just desert, and perish for ever!"<sup>2</sup> Nothing less than this attitude was to Bellamy real love to God, and no one who did not first love God and approve the law in such an unconditional way could believe the Gospel. But regeneration by the Holy Spirit was absolutely necessary in order for a sinner to be awakened and to exert this act of love.<sup>3</sup>

Bellamy and Sandeman, unlike as were their doctrines of faith, were at least agreed in the contention that Hervey's faith involved the belief of something which was not true. There is, said Bellamy, no absolute, unconditional grant of Christ to sinners contained in the Bible, as Hervey supposed.<sup>4</sup> It was true that every sinner had a warrant in Scripture to "come to Christ," but this was an invitation to a union with Christ, and there were no grounds at all for anyone out of Christ to believe that "pardon, grace and glory" were his.<sup>5</sup> Those promises have been

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<sup>1</sup>Bellamy, Letters And Dialogues Between Theron, Paulinus, and Aspasio, p. 28.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 209.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 110.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 36, 39.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 94.



made conditionally to those who repent, turn to God, and are reconciled to him by being united to Christ with a true and living faith.<sup>1</sup>

If, then, it is first necessary to be in Christ before sharing his benefits, it is also necessary to know that one is in Christ before one's share in the benefits can be known; "therefore," said Bellamy, "the first direct act of faith cannot consist in believing that his benefits are mine ..."<sup>2</sup> Is not this faith the belief of a lie? he asks. For if the thing believed true was not actually true before it was believed, believing it to be true cannot make it true, not according to reason, scripture, or experience.<sup>3</sup>

Assurance by the direct act of faith without any evidence is, he said, to trust in a spirit which might not be the Holy Spirit at all, but might as easily be Satan in disguise.<sup>4</sup> The only valid evidence for a state of salvation is sanctification.<sup>5</sup> As Bellamy put it:

no honest man ought to believe his state to be good, with more confidence than in exact proportion to his evidence. Nor is there any evidence that will pass with our final Judge, or that ought to be of any weight with us, but real holiness.<sup>6</sup>

Hervey's faith, he declared, was not a true faith at all, but mere presumption, since it was not based on evidence nor did

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 42, 103.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 152.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 90.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 181.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 190

it incorporate the element of repentance. It was the faith of self-deceived hypocrites.<sup>1</sup> The entire plan of salvation in Theron and Aspasio appeared to him as merely "dressing up experimental religion" in such a way that it encouraged hypocrites but left the awakened, honest sinners more bewildered than ever.<sup>2</sup> Not yet having heard of Hervey's death, Bellamy expressed the hope that he would see his errors and use his influential pen to try and counteract their pernicious influence.

Bellamy's Letters and Dialogues were reprinted in London in 1761<sup>3</sup> and were answered the same year by William Cudworth in "A Further Defence of Theron and Aspasio" appended to the second edition of his Defence of Theron and Aspasio. Cudworth declared that the disinterested love to God which Bellamy advocated was contrary to man's constitution and to the law of God.<sup>4</sup> No man is capable of loving his own destruction, he said; it is contrary to the laws of self-preservation, "so God hath in Sovereign Mercy seen fit, not to support Mr. Bellamy's Scheme ..."<sup>5</sup> He thought that Bellamy did not understand apostolic regeneration, which began with belief in the Gospel, not delight in the law. "I would remark here," he said,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 81, 143n.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 128.

<sup>3</sup>Bellamy, Works, III:77.

<sup>4</sup>Cudworth, Defence of Theron and Aspasio, 2nd ed., p. 224.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 226.

that if his impenitent Sinner, without the Gospel, can be brought to love the Law, as being in its own Nature holy, just and good, he stands in fair Way for obeying it also, and is very evidently not one of those whom our Lord Jesus came to seek and to save.<sup>1</sup>

He denied that the faith advocated by Hervey was a belief of a proposition which was without evidence and untrue; rather it was "an immediate Trust and Confidence in Christ alone for everlasting life, grounded upon very evident divine Declarations."<sup>2</sup> Bellamy's "capital mistake" was to suppose that Christ must be granted either absolutely or conditionally, whereas "it is evident, that Christ is a Gift to the World clear of this Alternative; He is a Gift to be unconditionally and immediately received and enjoyed,"<sup>3</sup> although admittedly none can be said to partake of the blessings except those who will accept them.

The Gospel, continued Cudworth, considers all men on a level before God, so that the grant of Christ is not made to the previously qualified, but indefinitely to sinners as such. Bellamy's whole scheme, on the contrary, was based on a conditional grant of Christ. In supposing that the benefits of the Gospel were only for those who were first "ungrafted into Christ" he was really contending for a previous qualification as a requisite for justification. Any such distinction between those in and out of Christ, declared Cudworth, was nothing but a self-righteous justification.<sup>4</sup> Bellamy's method of finding

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 228ff.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 245.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 246.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 249f.

assurance from sanctifying operations begun in the heart was no more than the assurance of the Pharisee, plainly founded on a distinction between the believer and the sinner. "The real Christian's confidence," said Cudworth, "is evidenced to be genuine by Love to that Truth which manifests him to be a Sinner even as others ..."<sup>1</sup>

In October, 1760, the Gentleman's Magazine published a letter in which a short and pointed attack upon Hervey's definition of faith was put forward in a dialogue between Thraso and Crito. Crito asks what Hervey means by faith.

Thraso. He defines faith to be "a real persuasion that the blessed Jesus has shed his blood for me, and fulfilled all righteousness in my stead: and that through this great atonement and glorious obedience, he has purchased, even for my sinful soul, reconciliation with God, sanctifying grace, and every spiritual blessing."

Crito. May not an habitual sinner have such a persuasion?

Thraso. He may.

In this abrupt manner the author of the letter had put his finger on one of the weakest points in Hervey's doctrine of faith.

In 1761 Colin Mackie, minister of the Associate Congregation at Montrose, published the substance of some of his sermons in a pamphlet called The True Comer, to which he subjoined a piece entitled "A Detection of the Spurious Faith in the Letters on Theron and Aspasio." Mackie considered Sandeman's errors "so dangerous, specious, and deceiving" that he felt

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 265.



called upon to answer them when he found that no one else in Scotland had made any move in that direction.<sup>1</sup> He contended for the appropriating act of faith, and it appeared to him that what Sandeman called a justifying faith was nothing more than "a mere Arminian and general popish faith."<sup>2</sup> "Sure there is not a devil in all hell," he declared, "but must and does believe all that this strange author make justifying faith to be."<sup>3</sup>

He thought that Sandeman had substituted mere reason for the supernatural grace of God which enables the believer to exercise his faith aright, and he saw this failure to ascribe faith to the Holy Spirit as the main defect in the Letters.<sup>4</sup> Such an interpretation, however, shows either a strong bias or a superficial reading of the Letters on Mackie's part, for whether or not he could accept Sandeman's definition of faith, the latter had presented it as the sole work of the Holy Spirit.

Mr. Sandeman Refuted By An Old Woman, an anonymous pamphlet of some 50 pages, appeared in London in 1761. The author enumerated ten points of censure upon Sandeman's work, accusing him of: (1) omitting regeneration, previous to the first act of faith; (2) failing to adequately define justifying faith; (3) deriding direct and reflex acts of faith; (4) reproaching the witness of the Holy Spirit; (5) denying the influence of Gospel

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<sup>1</sup>Mackie, The True Comer, p. 34.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 39f.

Grace on the Heart; (6) turning acts of pure faith into acts of love; (7) placing believers who sin under the curse of God; (8) making salvation conditional upon love; (9) falsely accusing those who assert appropriation of making faith the righteousness which justifies; and (10) dismissing all definitions of faith which differ from his own to the Regions of Darkness. He closed by declaring that he believed that Sandeman was an instrument of the devil, leading souls to eternal perdition.<sup>1</sup>

The Monthly Review thought that the pamphlet was "a very old womanly sort of a performance"<sup>2</sup> but Sandeman quipped: "Scarce inferior to any of the answers I have got from the men, young or old."<sup>3</sup>

About the end of May, 1761, a small pamphlet called Nymphas to Sosipater was published in Edinburgh in opposition to Sandeman's Letters. No copy of this piece has been found, but Sandeman quoted the entire Introduction from it in his third edition appendix.<sup>4</sup> The main portion of the pamphlet consisted of a series of extracts of nine letters written by Nymphas to Sosipater, censuring Sandeman's work. These were published without the knowledge or consent of the writer by Sosipater, apparently a minister of some note in the Church of Scotland.

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<sup>1</sup>p. 50.

<sup>2</sup>XXIV:473 (1761).

<sup>3</sup>Letters on Theron and Aspasio, II:359 (Appendix).

<sup>4</sup>Letters on Theron and Aspasio, 4th ed., II:418f. (3rd ed. appendix).

Nymphas approved of Sandeman's design "to bring men off from self dependence to an entire dependence on the naked bare truth,"<sup>1</sup> but did not approve the method he had chosen to accomplish it, particularly the omission of trust from faith. Sospater himself seems to have held an intermediate position. He did not agree that trust was a part of faith, which he defined as "an assent to the gospel, flowing from spiritual discoveries of its divine glory ..."<sup>2</sup> But he joined with Nymphas in defense of the clergy against Sandeman's severe attack upon them.<sup>3</sup>

With characteristic sarcasm Sandeman dismissed Nymphas to Sospater as a lament "that the New Testament cannot be so explained as to make the kingdom of Christ and that of the clergy to coincide!"<sup>4</sup>

Toward the end of 1761 Robert Riccaltoun published anonymously in Edinburgh a book entitled An Inquiry Into the Spirit and Tendency of Letters on Theron and Aspasio.<sup>5</sup> In it he attempted to expose Sandeman's "subtle" abuse of the Sacred Writings"<sup>6</sup> in order to counteract the pernicious influence which he feared the Letters would have on many readers.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 423n.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 419.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 424n.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>The book is dated 1762, but Sandeman says it was out in 1761. See Letters on Theron and Aspasio, II:360. Authority for the author is Dictionary of Anonymous and Pseudonymous English Literature, III:158.

<sup>6</sup>Riccaltoun, Inquiry into the Spirit and Tendency of Letters on Theron and Aspasio, p. iii.

Riccaltoun had been for 37 years the parish minister of Hopekirk. He had an interesting parallel to James Hervey in that he too was something of a nature writer. In 1726 he had published a short ode on "Winter," which is said to have given James Thomson, author of the Seasons, the original idea for his own poem Winter. This was not the first time that he had entered into controversy on matters of faith. In 1723 he had published A Sober Inquiry into the Grounds of the Present Differences in the Church of Scotland, one of the earliest works in the famous Marrow Controversy.<sup>1</sup>

Riccaltoun's present book was a defense of the men whom Sandeman had criticized. He gave his support to their doctrine of appropriating faith and to the necessity for the preliminary work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. Sandeman had no authority, he contended, for abusing the means of grace used by the serious in order to help them to believe. These people might already be real believers who were merely trying to overcome doubts. After all, only God could know who was a true believer and who was not.<sup>2</sup>

He thought that Sandeman's faith was merely a rational or historical faith, powerless to enliven one dead in sin.<sup>3</sup> Its

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<sup>1</sup>D.N.B., s.v. Riccaltoun, Robert.

<sup>2</sup>Riccaltoun, op. cit., pp. 39n-40n.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 46.



great defect was that it left the believer "as much in the dark as to his comfort, as if Jesus Christ had never appeared ..."<sup>1</sup> By insisting that Christians could obtain an assurance that their faith was genuine only from their own painful labors, and by further prohibiting them, under dire penalty, from doing anything at all until they were real believers, Sandeman had given them an impossible task, said Riccaltoun.<sup>2</sup> From such a doctrine the only safe way out was to run as fast and as far as possible from God in the hope that he would in the end overtake them with mercy and grant them faith. "Palaemon dare not avow this natural consequence of his new divinity; which it is to be feared, has deluded many into everlasting destruction,"<sup>3</sup> he declared.

Sandeman took some account of Riccaltoun's treatise in the appendix to his third edition of the Letters (July, 1762) but did not attempt a reply to his arguments. "The force of what he says," observed Sandeman, "is far from being new indeed, having been much hackneyed for many ages, till it is now grown quite threadbare."<sup>4</sup> He thought that he understood the reason for the reproach which the author had heaped upon the simple belief of the truth:

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>4</sup>Letters on Theron and Aspasio, 4th ed., II:361.

The more we observe the aspect of the clergy towards that grace, the less cause of wonder shall we find, at seeing eminent men among them highly provoked at the doctrine of it; for, so far as that doctrine is clearly understood, down comes their eminence by the lump.<sup>1</sup>

Riccaltoun's book was also answered in a six-penny pamphlet entitled Consideration on an Inquiry into the Spirit and Tendency of Letters on Theron and Aspasio. This particular piece has not come to light, but Sandeman briefly notes in the third edition of his Letters that it was published in Edinburgh early in 1762.<sup>2</sup>

The most voluminous (and undoubtedly the most virulent) reply to Sandeman's Letters was a two-volume work entitled Palaemon's Creed Reviewed and Examined. It was published in London and Edinburgh in the early months of 1762 by David Wilson, a minister of the Scottish Secession Church in London.<sup>3</sup>

Wilson, of course, gave his full support to the doctrines of the Secession Fathers and sharply condemned Sandeman for endeavouring to blacken the reputation of those worthy men.<sup>4</sup> The Letters on Theron and Aspasio, he said, were "nothing else but a confused jumble of Pelagian, Popish, Socinian and Antinomian

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 363.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 378.

<sup>3</sup>The work is dated 1762, but Sandeman says that the London edition was out late in 1761. See Letters on Theron and Aspasio, II:378.

<sup>4</sup>Wilson, Palaemon's Creed Reviewed and Examined, I:xxxiii.

errors, blended together with a little art, and interspersed now and then with some fantastical notions"<sup>1</sup> peculiar to the Sandemanians.

He too thought that Sandeman's principal error was the rejection of the preparatory work of the Holy Spirit in faith.<sup>2</sup> Nothing was more clearly taught in Scripture than that the word of the Gospel derives all its efficacy from the special operation of the Holy Spirit concurring with it.<sup>3</sup> If Sandeman denied that, then he must allow either that all men had a natural power to believe the Gospel or else that all who heard it would instantly become believers.<sup>4</sup> Wilson refused to take seriously Sandeman's contention that faith was supernaturally implanted in the conscience. There was no possible way of admitting it, he thought, except by the normal processes of "perception" and "persuasion."<sup>5</sup> To hold that a man could believe anything without an act of the mind, as Sandeman did, made no more sense to him than to say "that he may know without knowing, and believe without believing it; or, in other words, act without acting."<sup>6</sup>

Sandeman's attack upon the "popular preachers" for denying the comfort accompanying the simple belief of the Gospel seemed to Wilson entirely unjustified. He observed:

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., II:297.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., II:66.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 86.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., I:136.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 66, 71.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 85n.

... it is not easy to conceive how a sense of guilt, which is the only thing that disquiets the conscience, can be removed without a sense of forgiveness. And it is no less difficult to conceive how there can be a sense of forgiveness, without any assurance or persuasion of forgiveness, or any<sup>1</sup> thing to warrant or lay a foundation for such a persuasion.

To affirm that a man has no grounds to believe that his sins are forgiven until he has been led to forsake sin and work righteousness was, in effect, to maintain that no man could be justified by faith alone.<sup>2</sup> Sandeman came at last "to fix in plain Popery, or downright Socinianism,"<sup>3</sup> he declared.

Appropriating faith, on the other hand, gave an immediate assurance of salvation and so quieted the guilty conscience. It was not a false faith, as Sandeman had claimed, merely because it was the belief of something not true until believed. The Gospel laid a sure foundation which warranted any sinner to appropriate Christ and his salvation.<sup>4</sup> There was no other way a man could do this except by believing that he was saved, a truth which was certainly not true before he believed it.<sup>5</sup>

To guard his own doctrine against Antinomianism, however, Wilson had to adopt the same ambiguous position as Cudworth. He admitted that

works of righteousness and obedience to the law of God, are to be found with every true believer, and are necessary to evidence the truth of his faith, or to shew that it<sup>6</sup> is of the right kind, and that he is in a justified state ...

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 154.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 187n.



But he tried to maintain that this proof is posterior to the faith of assurance, not prior. It would seem that in the end his doctrine of assurance comes almost to that of Sandeman, but by a less consistent route.

On the whole, Wilson's book is not a work to be admired. His arguments are not always to the point and are interspersed with a multitude of some of the bitterest invectives of the controversy. Throughout the two volumes he continually alternates between charging Sandeman with Antinomianism and accusing him of teaching salvation by works. It is difficult to see how an argument could have been made that Sandeman's doctrine was Antinomian. Certainly a sounder one could have been made on the other side. But to charge him first with one and then the other was rather foolish and gives the impression Wilson was grasping at straws.

In the appendix to the third edition of his Letters Sandeman remarked that Wilson's book "may be considered the best answer Palaemon has got; as being in the most respects subservient to his views, and affording the fullest confirmation of his censures."<sup>1</sup> But he did not think that it would carry much weight with those who hoped to be saved by the truth already set forth in the Scriptures. The doctrine of appropriating faith required for its existence the false doctrine of a universal offer

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<sup>1</sup>Letters on Theron and Aspasio, 4th ed., II:379.

of Christ, he contended. Otherwise, general calls or invitations assuring unbelievers of a warrant in Scripture for them to "appropriate" Christ were not only invalid by irrelavent as well, for no unbeliever could have a relish for the blessings promised by Christ unless he had first been particularly called of God.<sup>1</sup>

Sandeman was obviously amused by the bitter spirit and inconsistent arguments that he found in Wilson's book. Its frequent invectives seemed to him more like distress shots than battle barrages.<sup>2</sup> He thought it gave the fullest view of the spirit engendered by the "popular" doctrine and the manner in which that doctrine operated "when freely exposed in its proper hatefulness by the scriptures."<sup>3</sup>

In his book against Sandeman, Wilson had also taken the opportunity to drop a few remarks of censure upon Joseph Bellamy for his opposition to the doctrine of appropriating faith in the Letters and Dialogues Between Theron, Paulinus, and Aspasio. He thought that he had never met a controversial writer "who handles the matter in debate between him and his antagonist with so little decency and discretion as Mr. Bellamy has done."<sup>4</sup>

This called forth from Bellamy a rejoinder of some 30 pages entitled A Blow at the Root of the Refined Antinomianism of the Present Age. It was published in New England early in 1763

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 410f.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 386.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 379.

<sup>4</sup>Wilson, Palaemon's Creed Reviewed and Examined, II:95n.

and was intended, as Bellamy put it, "to bring to a short issue, a controversy which has been the source of infinite mischief to the souls of mankind."<sup>1</sup>

He claimed that Wilson had repeated, "perhaps 200 times over," the same argument throughout his two volumes, and when it was all summed up it came to this:

God has, in fact, no where in his word declared that my sins are forgiven; however, I must believe they are forgiven, or I do not believe the word of God. It is not true before I believe it, but absolutely false; yet I have a good warrant to believe it is true, although I have no evidence of the thing from Scripture, sense or reason.<sup>2</sup>

This type of faith, said Bellamy, was irrational and unscriptural. It was the faith which a wicked man could hold as easily as any saint in the world.<sup>3</sup> "I have been particularly acquainted with many instances of sinners thus deluded," he testified. "Numbers of our converts in New-England twenty years

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<sup>1</sup>Bellamy, Works, III:77.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 106. This is not as unjust a characterization of the doctrine of appropriating faith as it might first appear. Walter Marshall said almost the same thing in his Gospel Mystery of Sanctification: "In the last place, Let it be well observed that the reason why we are to assure ourselves in our faith, that God freely giveth Christ and his salvation to us particularly, is not, because it is a truth before we believe it, but because it becomes a certain truth when we believe it, and because it will never be true, except we do in some measure persuade and assure ourselves that it is so. We have no absolute promise or declaration in scripture, that God certainly will or doth give Christ and his salvation to anyone of us in particular; neither do we know it to be true already by scripture, or sense, or reason, before we assure ourselves absolutely of it; yea we are without Christ's salvation at present, in a state of sin and misery, under the curse and wrath of God. Only I shall prove, that we are bound, by the command of God, thus to assure ourselves ..." (p. 201).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 95.

ago, were to all appearance converted thus."<sup>1</sup> He pointed out that the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1720 and again in 1722 had condemned this very doctrine of faith in The Marrow of Modern Divinity.<sup>2</sup>

In this second contribution to the controversy Bellamy reaffirmed his conviction that the only way a believer could be assured that he was justified was by knowing that he was united with Christ by a true and living faith and possessed the Christian graces accompanying such a faith. A man's sins were not blotted out simply because he believed they were.<sup>3</sup>

In 1765 another New Englander, Samuel Langdon of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, entered the controversy with a book of more than 300 pages entitled An Impartial Examination of Mr. Robert Sandeman's Letters on Theron and Aspasio.<sup>4</sup> Langdon was at that time the pastor of the First Church in Portsmouth. Later he rose to eminence as president of Harvard College and in 1788 was chosen a member of the New Hampshire convention which ratified the Federal Constitution.<sup>5</sup>

It is not necessary to seek far to find what drew Langdon into the controversy. In 1764 Robert Sandeman sailed for America,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., note.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 80, 103.

<sup>4</sup>The book was originally published in Portsmouth. (See British Museum Catalogue, s.v. Langdon, Samuel). The 1769 edition was used in this study.

<sup>5</sup>D.A.B., s.v. Langdon, Samuel.



and the first church which he established there was founded on May 4, 1765, in Portsmouth.<sup>1</sup>

In his attack Langdon declared that the logical consequence of Sandeman's doctrine was to rob faith of all of its hope. He acknowledged that Sandeman maintained that everyone who knows of the atonement and is persuaded of the possibility of justification is actually justified. But since Sandeman also denied that anyone could be certain of his own justification until it was proved by works of obedience, Langdon astutely argued that it must then be true that no one could be certain that he was even persuaded of the possibility of justification until so proven.<sup>2</sup>

He thought that Sandeman was unnecessarily frightened by the idea that a man might be justified by his own act. He pointed out that in an attempt to show that believing does not involve even an act of the mind Sandeman had taken the peculiar course of identifying faith with the truth believed. But he did not see how the attempt to remove faith entirely from the province of man's activity could be consistently upheld unless Sandeman went to the extreme of denying that thinking was an act of the mind. He observed that to contend

that believing means no more than the truth believed, must appear to every man of common sense, the most ridiculous trifling; and to introduce such odd philosophy into religion must be to impose upon men with vain deceit.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>D.N.B., s.v. Sandeman, Robert.

<sup>2</sup>Langdon, Impartial Examination of Sandeman's Letters, Part I, p. 73.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

Langdon thought that this problem arose from the false view that faith was a work of the law. True faith justified and saved, he held, "not as a meritorious act of legal obedience, but as it implies a clear view of our own guilt and misery, and an intire [sic] dependence on the righteousness of God in Christ."<sup>1</sup>

The next voice to be heard in the controversy over faith was that of Isaac Backus, a "New Light" Baptist minister of Middlesborough, Massachusetts. Backus was a noted champion of religious liberty, and his ministry seems to have been strongly marked by controversy.<sup>2</sup>

Backus, too, was drawn into the controversy by Sandeman's New England activities. The Sandemanian church at Portsmouth had disbanded in the autumn of 1766, whereupon its founder had gone down to Boston and gathered about him another small society.<sup>3</sup> Backus was disturbed by the new Sandemanian principles and fearful of their consequences. As an antidote he published in Boston in 1767 a pamphlet called True Faith Will Produce Good Works, which, as the title suggests, was designed to show that true faith paid the highest regard to the Divine precepts and was a powerful influence for holiness of life. To this essay he prefixed some blunt remarks on Sandeman's writings, declaring that they had been the instruments of hardening many believers in their iniquity and

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>2</sup>D.A.B., s.v. Backus, Isaac.

<sup>3</sup>Backus, True Faith Will Produce Good Works, p. 7n.

of perplexing others who were earnestly seeking a true faith.<sup>1</sup>

He also labeled Sandeman's treatment of Hervey and the other advocates of appropriating faith as "monstrous."<sup>2</sup>

Backus could see no effectual relation between the simple belief of the Gospel record and Christian obedience. It seemed to him that Sandeman ended with no more than

speculative notions about the truth, and some outward doings, without thinking he is possess'd of any good principle by which he stands more nearly related to God than other men; and without being conscious of having experienced any inward change, so as to act from right motives, or desiring so to do!<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, he contended, believers who possessed true faith were supported in all the work to which God had called them because they viewed the promises of the Gospel as "near," "sure," and "sufficient."<sup>4</sup>

Two rather belated additions to the literature of the controversy over saving faith were published in 1774 by John Barclay and James Tytler. Barclay's pamphlet was originally a letter written to the former congregation of William Cudworth in London. At that time Barclay had been the assistant minister of the Church of Scotland at Fettercairn in Kincardineshire. He had aroused opposition by espousing certain "heretical" opinions, among them being the opinion that assurance was of the essence of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 36, 40.

faith.<sup>1</sup> One of the members of the London congregation mentioned above wrote to him, complimenting him on his agreement with them concerning assurance, but expressing surprise that he could agree with the Sandemanians in rejecting the appropriating act.

Barclay replied in an unusually long letter dated October 19, 1771.<sup>2</sup>

In 1773 he was debarred by action of the General Assembly from holding any benefice in the Church of Scotland. His followers thereupon formed themselves into separate congregations at Fettercairn and Edinburgh and designated themselves Bereans. Barclay became the minister of the Edinburgh church.<sup>3</sup> In May of the following year he printed his letter to the London congregation, prefacing it with a short and not too friendly dedication to the General Assembly then convened.

In the pamphlet, entitled The Assurance of Faith Vindicated from the Misrepresentations of Sandeman and Cudworth, Barclay opposed both Sandeman and Cudworth. He thought that they had fallen by each other's blows but that both had been highly useful in demolishing the weak parts of the opposing system. Cudworth, he felt, had successfully refuted the idea that saving faith was only a persuasion that there was an atonement, while Sandeman had proved the absurdity of the appropriating act of faith.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>D.N.B., s.v. Barclay, John.

<sup>2</sup>Barclay, The Assurance of Faith Vindicated, p. vi.

<sup>3</sup>D.N.B., s.v. Barclay, John.

<sup>4</sup>Barclay, op. cit., pp. 1-3, 7.



He contended that Sandeman had built his system upon the supposition that every unbeliever is puzzled about the problem of how a sinner can be justified without the character of God suffering in the transaction. The joy of the simple belief of the Gospel was then the joy of discovering that this can be done (and in fact has been done) by an Atonement. But Barclay did not believe that unconverted sinners ever gave a thought to this problem.<sup>1</sup> Their main concern was a knowledge of their own justification, and rightly so, inasmuch as being justified was the same as knowing one was justified.<sup>2</sup> At this point, he held, Sandeman's faith was utterly deficient. It had removed only one insignificant difficulty; on the paramount question of assurance it could offer no more than a probability. Cudworth was thus justly at a loss to see what comfort there could be in such a faith.<sup>3</sup>

Cudworth's faith, however, seemed to Barclay no less dangerous. He charged that the doctrine of a universal warrant, upon which the appropriating act was based, had been "manufactured."<sup>4</sup>

Barclay's own doctrine of faith combined a simple belief of the Gospel record with immediate assurance. He believed that the Scriptures warranted him in claiming this assurance. "For it

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 21, 40.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 15, 20.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

is assuredly contained in the scripture, that all who believe the record are justified," he declared. "I believe the record; therefore I believe I am justified."<sup>1</sup> He further rejected the validity of evidence from good works in proving justification.<sup>2</sup>

James Tytler was an interesting figure. He was not a clergyman but an author. His wife had persuaded him to join the Glassites in Edinburgh, but she later deserted him, and he severed his connection with the church. As a result the Glassites withdrew their patronage from his apothecary's business and it collapsed. For several years he lived a difficult life working as a hack writer. His popularity gradually increased until in 1776 he was engaged to edit the second edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica. He actually wrote a large proportion of it himself. For a fire balloon ascension in Edinburgh in 1784 he also achieved some notoriety.

In 1774, however, his fortunes were at low ebb, and he was sojourning within the privileged sanctuary of Holyrood House to escape from his creditors. While there he produced several literary works and printed them on a press of his own construction. Among these was a pamphlet entitled The Doctrine of Assurance Considered in a Letter to Mr. John Barclay.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>3</sup>D.N.B., s.v. Tytler, James.

Much of Tytler's piece is a plea against the intolerance of religious parties and their readiness to name the damned as well as the erroneous. No sect had been more guilty of this practice than the Glassites, he admitted.<sup>1</sup>

Turning to the doctrine of faith he declared that Scriptural authority was on the side of Sandeman. Sandeman obtained assurance of a saving faith by keeping the commands of God; Cudworth obtained it directly by an appropriating act; Barclay just assumed it.<sup>2</sup> "Now the Apostle James tells us that a man is not justified without works" said Tytler:

and if he is not justified without them, he is not forgiven without them; consequently any assurance which a man may have of forgiveness antecedent to works, is a false one; for the Apostle's words are most explicit, "Ye see then, how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only."<sup>3</sup>

The same message could be found in the teachings of Jesus, who depicted the last judgment as proceeding entirely according to works.<sup>4</sup>

There was no other proof that any person could give of his being a real believer other than an appeal to his works, stated Tytler. Barclay's claim to an immediate certainty was based on false exegesis, taking only passages agreeable to his system and ignoring all which were opposed.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>p. 8.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

With the appearance of Tytler's pamphlet the controversy over the nature of saving faith aroused by Hervey's Theron and Aspasio came to an end. The issues had not been solved, and the controversial writings were not completely ignored and forgotten. The same problems have continued to confront later generations, and some theologians, looking back to this controversy, have even written against its literature. This may be seen, for example, in Andrew Fuller's Strictures on Sandemanianism (Nottingham, 1816) and John Anderson's Precious Truth (Pittsburgh, 1806), the latter written against a reprint of Bellamy's Letters and Dialogues. Of course, such books as these can hardly be said to have been a part of the controversy proper, but they well illustrate the fact that it had more than fleeting interest.



## CHAPTER VIII

### WESLEY'S ATTACK AND HERVEY'S VINDICATION

The second phase of the controversy aroused by Thomas and Aquinas was the dispute over the doctrine of the imputed righteousness of Christ. It was more or less parallel with that over the nature of saving faith but centered about the exchanges between James Hervey and John Wesley.

## PART III

### THE CONTROVERSY OVER IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS

In February, 1739, Whitefield had begun field preaching and was soon joined by Wesley.<sup>1</sup> In his Stoke Newington retreat Hervey received this news with astonishment. He immediately wrote requesting Wesley for preaching in the parish of other clergyman and suggesting that he either settle again at Oxford or else obtain a parish of his own. Wesley replied with one of the classic documents of the Revival, saying: "I look upon all the world as my parish . . ."<sup>2</sup> In a further letter he challenged Hervey to join him in the work,<sup>3</sup> but the latter was neither able nor willing.

<sup>1</sup>Thorpman, Life of George Whitefield, 31-32.

<sup>2</sup>The Letters of John Wesley, I, 447.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 551.

## CHAPTER VIII

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The beginning of the rift between these two old friends and fellow members of the Oxford "Holy Club" can be traced as far back as 1739, to a time even before Hervey adopted evangelical views. In February, 1739, Whitefield had begun field preaching and was soon joined by Wesley.<sup>1</sup> In his Stoke Abbey retreat Hervey received this news with astonishment. He immediately wrote rebuking Wesley for preaching in the parishes of other clergymen and suggesting that he either settle again at Oxford or else obtain a parish of his own. Wesley replied with one of the classic documents of the Revival, saying: "I look upon all the world as my parish ..."<sup>2</sup> In a further letter he challenged Hervey to join him in the work,<sup>3</sup> but the latter was neither able nor willing.

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<sup>1</sup>Tyerman, Life of George Whitefield, I:191.

<sup>2</sup>The Letters of John Wesley, I:284ff.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 331.

"I a thundering Boanerges! I a speaking-trumpet from heaven! ...." he wrote; "Never, dear Sir, never could you have made choice of so improper a person, so vastly unequal to the task."<sup>1</sup> Moreover, he could not approve of itinerant preaching on Scriptural grounds and again advised Wesley to settle in some parish.

This was no more than a minor disagreement carried on amidst mutual professions of friendship. The real issues over which the two men were destined to clash were those of the Quinquarticular Controversy, but the events of 1739 sowed the first seeds of discord.

In the following years Wesley became more and more confirmed in his Arminian theology, while Hervey, following Whitefield's lead, adopted Calvinistic views. Wesley would have preferred to maintain harmonious relations with the Calvinists, but circumstances dictated otherwise. He and his followers were forced to withdraw from the Fetter Lane Society in 1740 because of the Antinomianism of the Moravians.<sup>2</sup> But Antinomianism continued to plague his societies. Wesley blamed the Calvinistic doctrines, and in 1740 and 1741 published several pamphlets against predestination.<sup>3</sup> In 1744 the Conference declared that the Methodist

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 333.

<sup>2</sup>Journal of John Wesley, II:370.

<sup>3</sup>See Green, Works of John and Charles Wesley, Nos. 16, 22, 24, 27.

preachers had "leaned too much toward Calvinism."<sup>1</sup> In the following year Wesley, deeply disturbed by what he described as "the torrent of Antinomianism,"<sup>2</sup> published his two Dialogues on the subject.<sup>3</sup> In 1750 and 1751 the situation again became a subject of concern. James Wheatley, one of Wesley's preachers, was expelled for immorality, and an investigation of the preachers was begun.<sup>4</sup> The society at Wednesbury shrank from 300 members to 70 under the influence of the Calvinist teachers.<sup>5</sup> Several other entries in Wesley's journal indicate that the problem was extensive.<sup>6</sup> Again he found it necessary to take up his pen.

Hervey watched with dismay as Wesley attacked Calvinism, first in Serious Thoughts Upon the Perseverance of the Saints in 1751 and then in a larger work, Predestination Calmly Considered, in 1752.<sup>7</sup> To a friend he wrote:

Mr. [Wesley]'s last piece I have not read through. I can't say I am fond of that controversy. The doctrine of the perseverance of Christ's servants, Christ's children, Christ's spouse, and Christ's members, I am thoroughly persuaded of. Predestination and reprobation I think of, with fear and trembling. And if I should attempt to study them, I would study them on my knees.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Minutes of the Methodist Conference, I:3.

<sup>2</sup>Journal of John Wesley, III:178.

<sup>3</sup>See Green, op. cit., Nos. 70, 71.

<sup>4</sup>Journal of Charles Wesley, II:82ff. also Journal of John Wesley, III:531ff.

<sup>5</sup>Journal of Charles Wesley, II:85.

<sup>6</sup>Cf. Journal of John Wesley, III:463, 501ff, 519.

<sup>7</sup>See Green, op. cit., Nos. 153 and 155. The first publication involved him in a dispute with Dr. John Gill, a Calvinist minister and also a friend of Hervey. Predestination Calmly Considered was in part an answer to Gill.

<sup>8</sup>Gen. Col. Let. 98.



Their theological differences had weakened the bond between the two men, but their friendship was not yet broken. In 1754 Wesley was preparing his Explanatory Notes Upon The New Testament and asked Hervey to review his manuscript.<sup>1</sup> The same year Theron and Aspasio was undergoing final revision, and Hervey, according to previous agreement, began to submit it to Wesley for correction. He sent the manuscripts of his first three dialogues; Wesley sent them back with what he describes as "a few inconsiderable corrections."<sup>2</sup> Hervey complained: "You are not my friend, if you do not take more liberty with me."<sup>3</sup> Wesley promised to be more critical, and the manuscript was again forwarded to him.

This time Wesley laid the axe to the trunk of the whole system by attacking the doctrine of imputed righteousness. But that was not all. "He takes me very soundly to Task, on the Score of Predestination," Hervey complained to Lady Frances Shirley.

At which I am surprised. Because a Reader, ten Times less penetrating than He is, may easily see, that this Doctrine (be it true or false) makes no Part of my Scheme; never comes under Consideration; is purposely and carefully avoided. I cannot but fear, He has some sinister Design. Put the Wolf's Skin on the Sheep, and the Flock will shun Him, the Dogs will worry Him. I do not charge such an Artifice, but sometimes I cannot help forming a Suspicion.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Letter of Hervey quoted in Tyerman, Oxford Methodists, pp. 290f.

<sup>2</sup>Wesley, Works, X:317.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Letters to Lady F. Shirley, Let. 74.

Hervey was offended. Wesley had struck a telling blow. It is difficult for any man to graciously accept criticism against his most cherished beliefs, and Hervey was unusually sensitive. Wesley saw no more of the manuscript.

In February, 1755, Theron and Aspasio was published. Wesley soon read it, no doubt with misgivings, and penned his thoughts freely to Hervey.<sup>1</sup> He received no reply, but both men passed the letter among their friends. Writing to Ryland in August, Hervey says:

Pray return Mr. W[esley]'s letter. I find, by private intelligence, that he has shown it in London; and has thought proper to animadvert upon me, by name, from his pulpit. I am inclined to take no notice either of his preaching or his writing.<sup>2</sup>

Hervey did not reply and Wesley's letter has not been preserved.

#### Wesley's 1756 Letter.

The matter was quietly allowed to subside for nearly a year. Then Hervey was excited by the news, conveyed to him by two former Methodist preachers, that Wesley was then in Ireland preparing a public reply to Theron and Aspasio.<sup>3</sup> This information proved to be misleading. Wesley did write a fairly lengthy criticism of the Dialogues, but it was only a private

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<sup>1</sup>Wesley, Works, X:317.

<sup>2</sup>Letters to Ryland, Let. 19. The source of intelligence was undoubtedly George Whitefield. The letter shows that he was then staying at Hervey's house.

<sup>3</sup>Hervey, Letters to Ryland, Let. 21.

letter which he sent to Hervey under the date of October 15, 1756.

"I had not the least thought of making it public," Wesley declared later.

I only spoke my private thoughts in a free, open manner, to a friend dear as a brother, - I had almost said to a pupil, - to a son; for so near I still accounted him.<sup>1</sup>

In the letter Wesley expressed his approval of several things in Theron and Aspasio. He thought that the doctrine of original sin had been established by "irrefragable arguments,"<sup>2</sup> and that in the main the third and fourth dialogues contained "an admirable illustration and confirmation of the great doctrine of Christ's satisfaction."<sup>3</sup> But, said Wesley,

for Christ's sake, and for the sake of the immortal souls which he has purchased with his blood, do not dispute for that particular phrase, "the imputed righteousness of Christ." It is not scriptural; it is not necessary. ...But it has done immense hurt.<sup>4</sup>

He pointed out that Hervey himself had acknowledged:

To ascribe pardon to Christ's passive, eternal life to his active, righteousness, is fanciful rather than judicious. His universal obedience from his birth to his death is the one foundation of my hope.<sup>5</sup>

"This," asserted Wesley, "is unquestionably right. But if it be," he added,

there is no manner of need to make the imputation of his active righteousness a separate and laboured head of discourse. O that you had been content with this plain scriptural account, and spared some of the dialogues and letters that follow.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Works, X:317.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 326.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 318.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Wesley's paraphrase of Hervey's explanation in Theron and Aspasio, I:68f.

<sup>6</sup>Works, X:318.

It was the phrase "imputed righteousness" itself which Wesley attacked; he did not deny the actual fact of imputation. He admitted that they were agreed on the doctrine.<sup>1</sup> It is plain, however, that there was a wide difference between what Wesley understood by imputed righteousness and what it meant to Hervey.

To Wesley, what Christ has done was only the foundation of the believer's salvation. He held that "through the merits of his life and death, every believer is justified,"<sup>2</sup> but that this is a conditional justification, the terms of which are repentance and faith.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, righteousness is not only imputed but implanted as well, God first accounting the believers righteousness in justification and then making him righteous.<sup>4</sup> The latter inherent righteousness was to Wesley fully as essential as imputed righteousness, since every believer would receive his final reward according to his own labors.<sup>5</sup>

For Hervey, on the other hand, the imputed righteousness of Christ was the sole ground of hope. In Theron and Aspasio he had said of believers: "Notorious Transgressors in Themselves, they have a sinless Obedience in CHRIST."<sup>6</sup> He had declared that "the Claims of the Law are all answered,"<sup>7</sup> and had spoken of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 329.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 322.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 323.

<sup>6</sup>Theron and Aspasio, II:73.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 319.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 331.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 317.



"a Righteousness, which answers all that the CREATOR requires, and that the Creature needs ..."<sup>1</sup>

"Is not this Antinomianism without a mask?" asked Wesley, adding:

I have seen such terrible effects of this unscriptural way of speaking, even on those "who had once clean escaped from the pollutions of the world," that I cannot but earnestly wish you would speak no otherwise than do the oracles of God. Certainly this mode of expression is not momentous. It is always dangerous, often fatal.<sup>2</sup>

Theron, in his opposition to Aspasio's plan of salvation in the Dialogues, had objected: "But if CHRIST's perfect Obedience be accounted ours, methinks, We should have no more Need of pardoning Mercy, than CHRIST himself."<sup>3</sup>

"The consequence is good. You have started an objection which you cannot answer," challenged Wesley. "You say indeed, 'Yes, we do need pardon; for in many things we offend all.' What then? If his obedience be ours, we still perfectly obey in him."<sup>4</sup> "This is the grand, palpable objection to that whole scheme," he declared.

It directly "makes void the law." It makes thousands content to live and die "transgressors of the law," because Christ fulfilled it "for them." Therefore, though I believe he hath lived and died for me, yet I would speak very tenderly and sparingly of the former, (and never separately from the latter,) even as sparingly as do the Scriptures, for fear of this dreadful consequence.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 367n.

<sup>2</sup>Works, X:328.

<sup>3</sup>Theron and Aspasio, II:71.

<sup>4</sup>Works, X:326.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 330.

Wesley also made a vigorous attack upon Hervey for endorsing the doctrine of election and reprobation. True enough, Hervey had barely mentioned the subject and then only in the words of Scripture. But in the course of his Dialogues he had also made several remarks which Wesley rightly interpreted as a stand for the doctrine of final perseverance,<sup>1</sup> Moreover, he had cast aspersions upon the idea of perfection, one of Wesley's favorite tenets.<sup>2</sup> Wesley saw the whole pattern of the Five Points of Calvinism in Theron and Aspasio and he lashed out bitterly against his old friend.

Of Hervey's assertion: "On those who reject the atonement, just severity" Wesley asked:

Was it ever possible for them not to reject it? If not, how is it just to cast them into a lake of fire for not doing what it was impossible they should do? Would it be just (make it your own case) to cast you into hell for not touching heaven with your hand?<sup>3</sup>

Hervey had spoken of the righteousness of Christ wrought out "for all his people." To this Wesley retorted:

But what becomes of all other people? They must inevitably perish for ever. The die was cast or ever they were in being. The doctrine to pass them by has

Consign'd their unborn souls to hell,  
And damn'd them from their mother's womb!

I could sooner be a Turk, a Deist, yea an Atheist, than I could believe this. It is less absurd to deny the very being of God, than to make him an almighty tyrant.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See Wesley, Works, X:319, 321, 333.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 320.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 327.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 334.

The problem was grave and Wesley's remarks were forthright, but his letter was not without its more humorous aspects. It sunk to a more mundane level with the following criticism of some of Hervey's phrases:

... I doubt whether "mere shrimps" ... be not too low an expression, and whether You might not well have said nothing of "cod, the standing repast of lent," or concerning "the exquisite relish of turbot, or the deliciousness of sturgeon." Are not<sup>1</sup> such observations beneath the dignity of a Minister of Christ.

In concluding Wesley expressed the wish that Hervey had seen fit to execute the Dialogues in a different manner. "Most of the grand truths of Christianity are herein both explained and proved with great strength and clearness," he commented.

Why was anything intermixed which could prevent any serious Christian's recommending them to all mankind? anything which must necessarily render them exceptionable to so many thousands of the children of God.<sup>2</sup>

In a fighting mood Hervey sent the letter to his friend Ryland. "Herewith you have the grand attack from Mr. W. of which I apprised you some time ago," he wrote. "Examine it closely; return it speedily; demolish the battery, and spike up the cannon." Then, more cautiously, he added:

I have not answered in any shape; and, when I do answer with my pen, I propose nothing more than a general acknowledgment, and an inquiry,<sup>3</sup> whether he proposes to print his animadversions?

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 332.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 335.

<sup>3</sup>Letters to Ryland, Let. 23.

For over a year Wesley waited, but in vain; Hervey did not reply. In December, 1757, Wesley retired to Lewisham where he spent several days in preparing for the press his Preservative Against Unsettled Notions in Religion. The Preservative was a compilation of doctrinal essays and abridgments of earlier works, designed, as he said, "not to reclaim, but to preserve: Not to convince those who are already perverted, but to prevent the Perversion of Others."<sup>1</sup> Along with the essays he included, apparently without any revision his 1756 letter to Hervey. The Preservative was published in April of the following year.<sup>2</sup>

Tyerman<sup>3</sup> expressed considerable perplexity at finding that Hervey began his reply to Wesley in January, 1758, long before the Preservative was published. This in itself would not have been a real difficulty, for through his usual channels of intelligence, Hervey might well have known that the Preservative had been sent to the printer in December. It appears, however, that he did not know of it, nor did he begin his reply in January. Tyerman based his conclusions upon two letters in the Ryland collection, one dated "Weston, March, 1758" and the other "Saturday Morn. Jan. 1758."<sup>4</sup> In both of them Hervey notes that

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<sup>1</sup>Wesley, Preservative Against Unsettled Notions in Religion, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Gentleman's Magazine, 28:184 (April, 1758).

<sup>3</sup>The Oxford Methodists, pp. 316f.

<sup>4</sup>Letters to Ryland, Lets. 34 and 36.



he is then engaged in writing his answer to Wesley. These two letters (as has been shown to be the case with several others) have undoubtedly been misdated, the compiler adding "March, 1758" to the one and "Jan. 1758" to the other.<sup>1</sup> They both belong nearer the close of 1758, as a consideration of several other letters will substantiate.

On March 4th Hervey sent the 1756 letter from Wesley to one of his friends with the following comment:

I have a long letter, containing two or three sheets, from Mr Wesley. - It consists of animadversions on my Dialogues and Letters, which I should be glad if you would peruse, and favour me with your opinion. He wrote me one before, more stinging and sarcastic than this. I have taken no notice of either.<sup>2</sup>

On June 23rd, after the publication of the Preservative Hervey wrote another letter which would appear to be to the same correspondent. He said in part:

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<sup>1</sup>The compiler has obviously tried to arrange the letters as chronologically as possible. The fact that Hervey often failed to date them made this rather difficult. The compiler has, unfortunately, failed to indicate his own additions. When both month and day are given they have been accepted as correct, since the compiler would hardly have tried to place the letter to the 'exact day. The year may have been added later to any of the Ryland letters, and when month and year are given without the day, as in this case, they must be held open to question.

<sup>2</sup>Gen. Col. Let. 199.

Gen. Col. Let. 199.

Letters to Ryland, Let. 33.

Hervey's letters to Oudworth in Oudworth, Diocese of Theron and Asaph, p. 80 and note.

I little thought, when I put Mr Wesley's manuscript into your hand, that I should see it in print so soon. I took very little notice of it, and let it lie by me several months, without giving it an attentive consideration ... Now then the question is, Whether I shall attempt to answer it? Give me your opinion ...<sup>1</sup>

It is apparent that even at this date Hervey had not yet begun his reply. But a month later it was well under way. On July 15th he wrote to Ryland:

I have some thoughts of answering Mr. Wesley's Remarks. I mention this design, that, unfledged as it is, it may have the benefit of your prayers.<sup>2</sup>

The same day he sent a letter to William Cudworth, requesting a confirmation of address, so that he might send a large manuscript. Cudworth notes that this was the answer to Wesley.<sup>3</sup>

There is only one perplexing point in this whole affair. Why did Hervey suddenly send Wesley's letter to a correspondent in March, 1758, after it had lain unanswered for nearly a year and a half? He had originally been told that the letter was to be a public attack upon him. Had he now received the additional information that Wesley was having it printed after all? The letters which have been quoted make this seem unlikely.

There is another possible explanation. Only a few months previously Wesley had written and published one of his

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<sup>1</sup>Gen. Col. Let. 197.

<sup>2</sup>Letters to Ryland, Let. 39.

<sup>3</sup>Hervey's letters to Cudworth in Cudworth, Defence of Theron and Aspasio, p. 60 and note.

major works, the lengthy treatise on Original Sin.<sup>1</sup> In it he quoted several passages from Theron and Aspasio, one of which concerned Christ as a Federal Head. Hervey had said that "as Adam was the first general Representative of this Kind, CHRIST was the second and the last ..." <sup>2</sup> In Wesley's book the words "this Kind" had been changed to "mankind," making the sentence read as if Christ was a representative of all mankind. At the end of the same quotation the following sentence, written by Wesley himself, had been included within the quotation marks: "All these expressions demonstrate, that Adam (as well as Christ) was a representative of all mankind; and that what he did in this capacity did not terminate in himself, but affected all whom he represented."<sup>3</sup>

The effect of this alteration had been to make it appear that Hervey was an advocate of general redemption. He was certain that it had been deliberate, and he was extremely annoyed. "This is a very injurious representation," he complained to a correspondent.

One sentence is a palpable misquotation. Would it be proper to take any notice of it? I am sometimes apprehensive, that he would draw me into a dispute about particular redemption. I know he can say startling and horrid things on this subject; and this, perhaps, might be the most effectual method to prejudice people against my principal point.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The Doctrine of Original Sin (Bristol, 1757).

<sup>2</sup>Theron and Aspasio, I:206f.

<sup>3</sup>Wesley, Works, IX:333.

<sup>4</sup>Gen. Col. Let. 196.

Perhaps here is the answer to the dilemma. It is apparent that the idea of publicly exposing the injustice done him had at least crossed Hervey's mind. That he should also have acquired at this time a renewed interest in his opponent's letter seems only natural in the circumstances.

From July until his death in December Hervey was busy preparing his vindication. He was laboring under a severe handicap, for his consumption had reached an acute stage. A cough would seize him in the night and leave him so weak that he had little strength to work the next day.<sup>1</sup> But he carried on determinedly. As usual, every page passed under Cudworth's vigilant eye. "I must extreat you to get Time for the Revisal of all; which shall be sent you, as you shall be able to dispatch the work,"<sup>2</sup> wrote Hervey. During the latter part of July and all during August the manuscripts travelled back and forth.<sup>3</sup>

Ryland, too, took an interest in the project. One of Hervey's letters to him shows rather clearly the bitter spirit that had now transformed the usual gentle nature of the author:

You enquire after my intended answer to Mr. Wesley: I am transcribing it for the press, but find it difficult to preserve the decency of the gentleman, and the meekness of the Christian: there is so much unfair dealing running through my opponent's objections, and the most magisterial air all along supplying the place of argument. Pray for me, dear Friend, that I may not betray the blessed cause, by the weakness of my reasoning; nor dishonour it by the badness of my temper.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Letters to Ryland, Let. 34.

<sup>2</sup>Hervey's letters to Cudworth in Cudworth, Defence of Theron and Aspasio, p. 61.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 62ff.

<sup>4</sup>Letters to Ryland, Let. 34. See also Gen. Col. Let. 205. (October 24, 1758) which expresses almost identical sentiments.



Meanwhile, these activities came to the attention of Wesley. Returning to London from Norwich in November, he learned from a Mr. Pierce at Bury St. Edmunds that Hervey was about to publish a volume against him. Pierce told him that the information had been obtained only a few days before from William Cudworth, who claimed to have prevailed upon Hervey to defend himself, and who boasted that Hervey had given him full power to make whatever changes he pleased in the manuscript.<sup>1</sup> Wesley thereupon wrote to Hervey, saying that he was free to write whatever he pleased, but reminding him that before the letter had been printed in the Preservative it had been sent to him privately and a reply awaited for several months. He asked that Hervey accord him the same treatment: send his complaints privately and wait as many months. If in that time he received no satisfactory answer he could then publish them if he chose. "But whatever you do in this respect," added Wesley,

one thing I request of you: give no countenance to that insolent, scurrilous, virulent libel which bears the name of William Cudworth. Indeed, how you can converse with a man of his spirit I cannot comprehend. O leave not your old, well-tried friends! The new is not comparable to them. I speak not this because I am afraid of what any one can say or do to me. But I am really concerned for you: an evil man has gained the ascendant over you, and has persuaded a dying man, who had shunned it all his life, to enter into controversy as he is stepping into eternity!<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Wesley, Works, X:346. See also Letters of John Wesley, IV:47.

<sup>2</sup>Letters of John Wesley, IV:47.

Some explanation of this outburst is perhaps needed at this point. More than ten years previously Wesley and Cudworth had come into conflict. Wesley accounted Cudworth an Antinomian. In his Dialogue Between an Antinomian and His Friend, published in 1745, he put into the mouth of the Antinomian some expressions from Cudworth's pamphlet Marks and Evidences.<sup>1</sup> Cudworth resented this and countered with A Dialogue Between a Preacher of Inherent Righteousness, and a Preacher of God's Righteousness.<sup>2</sup> Wesley then published A Second Dialogue Between an Antinomian and His Friend. This time he quoted from Cudworth's dialogue and mentioned Cudworth by name.<sup>3</sup> The latter also responded with a "Second Dialogue" which he appended to his pamphlet Truth Defended, published in 1746.<sup>4</sup>

The angry feelings aroused by this exchange never completely abated. Until Cudworth's death the two men remained enemies. Some idea of their relationships can be gained from Wesley's record of their meeting at Farncett on March 25, 1759.

We found William Cudworth had preached there in the morning. It was exceedingly good for my sense of honour to come just after him. The people looked as direful upon me as if it had been Satan in person ... After preaching I found Mr. Cudworth sitting in the pulpit behind me, whom I quietly and silently passed by.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Wesley, Works, X:266ff.

<sup>2</sup>Green, Anti-Methodist Publications, No. 189.

<sup>3</sup>Wesley, Works, X:276ff.

<sup>4</sup>Green, op. cit., No. 201.

<sup>5</sup>Journal of John Wesley, IV:302f.

There can be little doubt that Hervey's alliance with Cudworth in 1755 had tended to weaken the bond of friendship between Hervey and Wesley.

In 1758 Wesley had incorporated into his Preservative Against Unsettled Notions in Religion an extract of his first Dialogue Between an Antinomian and His Friend. Cudworth replied to this by issuing A Preservative in Perilous Times. It bears no date, but was apparently circulated in 1758.<sup>1</sup> He condemned Wesley for reviving the controversy on Antinomianism which they had carried on in 1745. As a counter measure he included an extract of the two dialogues in which he had replied to Wesley thirteen years before.

He also included a section in which he criticized the letter to Hervey which Wesley had printed in his own Preservative. He thought that Wesley's whole treatment of imputed righteousness was inconsistent, first in acknowledging that Christ's universal obedience from birth to death was the foundation of his hope and then in immediately denying that Christ was man's substitute as to justifying obedience.<sup>2</sup> He also thought Wesley had been unfair with Hervey over the question of reprobation. It was really Wesley, he said, who limited the grace of God by his conditions;

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<sup>1</sup>Whitebrook, William Cudworth and His Connexion, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Cudworth, A Preservative In Perilous Times, p. 68.

he included all the requirements of the old law in the new conditions of faith and repentance.<sup>1</sup> Cudworth agreed that the Scriptures said "repent and believe," but he held that believing in this sense meant no more than believing that God has given eternal life as a free gift, without terms or conditions, and that repentance meant merely being converted from a denial of this truth.<sup>2</sup>

Cudworth was undoubtedly looking forward with considerable anticipation to the attack which Hervey himself was about to make upon Wesley. But when Hervey became extremely ill in December, 1758, he had still not completed his manuscript. Hearing how dangerously ill he was, Cudworth wrote to him to remind him of the importance of leaving some instruction about the manuscript.<sup>3</sup>

Hervey could only reply: "Dear Mr. Cudworth, I am so weak, I am scarcely able to write my Name."<sup>4</sup>

On the evening before Hervey died his brother asked him whether he desired to have the letters to Wesley published. He replied that he did not, since he had finished only about half of them. The corrections for the remaining part were mostly in a

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 79.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 70f.

<sup>3</sup>Cudworth, Defence of Theron and Aspasio, p. 66n.

<sup>4</sup>Hervey's letters to Cudworth, Ibid., p. 66.



shorthand which no one else could decipher. As it was not a finished piece, he said, he desired that his brother think no more about it.<sup>1</sup>

Whether this is the real reason for Hervey's decision will never be known. It is just possible that Wesley's last plea to him had produced the desired effect and that he would never have published his vindication anyway. Wesley, at least, was inclined to this view.<sup>2</sup> For several years William Hervey withstood the solicitations of several of his brother's friends, who wanted to have the manuscript printed. The editor of the two volumes of Hervey's personal letters which were published in 1760 publicly expressed the wish that it could be printed.<sup>3</sup> So did William Cudworth.<sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile, Wesley was again having trouble with Antinomianism. In 1761 his societies were larger everywhere than they had been for several years, but the enemy was busily sowing tares among the good seed.<sup>5</sup> To help counteract their influence Wesley published in 1762 a small tract called A Blow at the Root in which he inveighed against those who were teaching "that Christ

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<sup>1</sup>Hervey, Eleven Letters, p. v.

<sup>2</sup>Works, X:336.

<sup>3</sup>A Collection of the Letters of James Hervey, I:xiii.

<sup>4</sup>A Defence of Theron and Aspasio, p. 60n.

<sup>5</sup>See Journal of John Wesley, IV:470, 476.

had done, as well as suffered all; that his righteousness being imputed to us, we need none of our own ..."<sup>1</sup> This doctrine was indeed a "blow at the root" of all true religion, he said, and wherever it was received, it left no place for holiness.<sup>2</sup>

Soon an anonymous opponent responded with a pamphlet entitled The Scripture Doctrine of Imputed Righteousness, Asserted and Maintained by the Rev. Mr. John Wesley. It was made up of a series of quotations taken from the ninth and tenth volumes of Wesley's Christian Library<sup>3</sup>, put together without quotation marks and with no indication of their source. It had the appearance of a holograph and purported to be from Wesley's pen. The tract was intended to show that he really believed and maintained the doctrine of imputed righteousness. Among other comments it stated categorically that the righteousness which Christ performed was imputed to believers "so that GOD looks on US as if we had performed PERFECT Righteousness; and when that is done he saves us."<sup>4</sup>

Upon reading this tract Wesley felt the necessity of publishing his real views upon the subject; therefore, in April he wrote a very short piece which he called Thoughts on the Imputed Righteousness of Christ. In it he said that he blamed no one for using an expression believed Scriptural, but declared that he dare not insist upon the use of the expression "the righteousness

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<sup>1</sup>Works, X:366.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>The Scripture Doctrine of Imputed Righteousness, p. 11.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

of Christ" because he could not find it anywhere in the Bible. Paul doubtless meant the righteousness of Christ when he spoke in Romans 5:18 of "the righteousness of one," but the question was not what was meant but what was said. "I am myself the more sparing in the use of it," said Wesley, "because it has been so frequently and so dreadfully abused; and because the Antinomians use it at this day to justify the grossest abominations."<sup>1</sup>

The use of such expressions as "the imputed righteousness of Christ" tended to place the holy and the unholy upon much the same level and to make Christ the minister of sin. "For if the very personal obedience of Christ (as those expressions directly lead me to think) be mine the moment I believe, can anything be added thereto?"<sup>2</sup> he asked.

A second edition of the anonymous tract was published in reply the following year. It had grown to nearly three times its original size, the author having added some remarks intended to show that Wesley had been inconsistent on the matter of imputed righteousness. It was now obvious that the first edition had not been a serious effort, for the author declared that even in the Preservative Wesley had shown a strong aversion to the doctrine. His real complaint was that even while Wesley was trying to preserve others from unsettled notions, he had been "wavering and unsteady" in his own, palming off on the readers of his Christian

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<sup>1</sup>Works, X:315.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

Library a doctrine which he actually did not approve.<sup>1</sup> To establish his point the author set against Wesley's comments in the Thoughts on the Imputed Righteousness of Christ passages of a contrary sense selected again from the Christian Library.<sup>2</sup>

Wesley replied to this second edition in a letter dated April 5, 1763, and published in the London Chronicle. He called the pamphlet a "pious fraud." The argument which the writer had used to try to establish its authenticity, he said, was no proof at all, since the passages were all taken from the Christian Library. "But the Christian Library is not Mr. Wesley's writing; it is 'Extracts from and Abridgments of' other writers; the subject of which I highly approve, but I will not be accountable for every expression."<sup>3</sup>

Finally, in 1764 a surreptitious edition of Hervey's answer to Wesley was circulated under the title Aspasio Vindicated and the Scripture Doctrine of Imputed Righteousness Defended. It was issued without any clue as to the identity of the editor and without even the name of the printer. It claimed to be an authentic version but not the original. The preface stated:

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<sup>1</sup>The Scripture Doctrine of Imputed Righteousness, p. 11ff.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 14ff.

<sup>3</sup>Quoted in Tyerman, Life of John Wesley, II:469f.



If, after all, any should stigmatize the following with being counterfeit, as nothing but the original can detect it, only let that appear, and all the wishes, ends, and aims in the publication of this, will be more completely answered ...<sup>1</sup>

In the following year the original did appear. It was entitled Eleven Letters from the Late Rev. Mr. Hervey to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley and was published by William Hervey from his brother's manuscript. In the preface he sharply rebuked the editor of Aspasio Vindicated for sending out "so mangled a Performance" under his brother's name. He deemed it his duty to send forth a correct edition; therefore, he had called a friend to his assistance and they had produced as perfect a copy as they could make out from the manuscript.<sup>2</sup>

#### Hervey's Eleven Letters.

The Eleven Letters was a sentence by sentence commentary on Wesley's letter and filled a volume of just under 300 pages. Hervey agreed with nothing which had been urged against him. Many of Wesley's censures he regarded as marked with more of "the Air of a Caveat, than a Confutation."<sup>3</sup> Never had he met with a person who seemed so totally ignorant of the wide difference between saying and proving.<sup>4</sup> He suggested that Wesley's

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<sup>1</sup>Hervey, Aspasio Vindicated, p. 44.

<sup>2</sup>Hervey, Eleven Letters, p. vi.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 245.

letter must have found its way into the world by stealth, since from its condescending attitude it was obviously designed only for the Methodist societies.<sup>1</sup>

He thought that Wesley's criticism had been unfair in that it had failed to take account of his explanation that when he spoke of imputed righteousness he always included both active and passive righteousness - both the life and death of Christ. "I would not wish, Sir," he said, "to have a plainer Proof, that you do not discard the active, than Aspasio has hereby given, that he never excludes the passive."<sup>2</sup>

He pointed out that Wesley had acknowledged that Christ's active righteousness together with his death was the only foundation of a sinner's hope. If that was the case, was it really possible to treat of such an important topic too minutely or too distinctly?<sup>3</sup> "Faith," he asserted,

is never weary of viewing either the active or passive Obedience of IMMANUEL. Faith will declare, that neither of these Points can be set forth in too strong or too recommending a Light.<sup>4</sup>

He reaffirmed that the active and passive righteousness should always be looked upon "as a grand and glorious Aggregate, in their Agency inseparable," but held that they could nevertheless be distinguished in meditation. "Being thus distinguishable," he

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 140.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

said, "at proper times, we meditate upon each distinctly."<sup>1</sup>

The fact that the Antinomians abused the expression "imputed righteousness" was to Hervey no argument against its soundness, and he suspected that it was the doctrine and its consequences, rather than the expression itself to which his opponent really objected.<sup>2</sup> He accused Wesley of opposing imputed righteousness because of a predilection for the merit of good works in salvation.<sup>3</sup> Wesley's soteriology involved only the possibility of salvation.<sup>4</sup> His teaching that repentance and faith were terms or conditions of salvation was to Hervey the same as the doctrine of the Council of Trent, and this was perhaps the greatest of the Roman Church's abominations, since it was in direct opposition to the gospel of a free redemption.<sup>5</sup> He declared that if salvation is upon conditions

it cannot be of Grace. It must, in some Measure at least, be of Works ... At this Door the Notion of Merit will unavoidably creep in. Because my Performance of the Conditions is meritorious of the covenanted<sup>6</sup> Reward. So far meritorious, that the Reward is my due.

Most of Hervey's anger was vented against the fact that Wesley had attacked him on the issue of predestination. He had purposely tried to avoid that problem. When Aspasio had mentioned predestination, Hervey pointed out, he had done so

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 122.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 118.

only in the words of Scripture and had made no attempt at all either to explain or to establish the doctrine. Never once in the whole three volumes had he touched upon absolute predestination.<sup>1</sup> "Yet," complained Hervey, "Mr. Wesley is resolved at all Adventures, with or without Occasion, to introduce these Subjects of deep and perplexed Disputation."<sup>2</sup>

In justification by imputed righteousness, he explained, they proceeded neither upon particular nor universal redemption but only upon

the divine Grant, and the divine Invitation. We assure ourselves of present and eternal Salvation, through this perfect Righteousness, not as Persons elected, but as Persons warranted by the Word of GOD, and led by the SPIRIT of GOD.<sup>3</sup>

God did not require him to touch Heaven with his hand, as Wesley had so injuriously suggested, but God did invite and require him to accept Christ and his salvation. If he overlooked the gift, the fault was his own.<sup>4</sup> He thought no one had any cause for complaint when salvation was set before all in the Gospel, and when all not only had a warrant to receive it, but were commanded to do so. For Hervey this was sufficient. "If they, or you, Sir, chuse to pry further, and to intrude into the Divine Secrets," he said to Wesley,

I must leave you to yourselves; saying, as I depart, The secret Things belong unto the LORD our GOD; but those Things which are revealed, belong unto us and our Children.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 185.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 287.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 23. (Deut. 29:29).



Although Hervey attempted to remain on neutral ground on the question of predestination, he had somewhat more definite ideas about final perseverance and about Wesley's doctrine of perfection. The former he approved without qualification; it was essential to the plan of salvation, and Wesley's attempt to expurge it was in effect to take the good news from the Gospel. Said Hervey

If he, who is to Day basking in the divine Favour, may before the Morrow be weltring [sic] in a Lake of Fire; then Joy, even Joy in the HOLY GHOST is unreasonable; and Peace, even that Peace which passeth all Understanding, is chimerical.<sup>1</sup>

He looked upon Wesley's doctrine of perfection as "a mere Delusion"<sup>2</sup> and throughout the letters made several thrusts against it. Wesley's principle mistake, he thought, was that of holding too low an opinion of the Divine Law. This error unavoidably led him not only into the false doctrine of personal perfection but also into a spirit of legality, an aversion to imputed righteousness, and, he added, "I fear, a Tincture of Pharisaical Pride."<sup>3</sup>

Hervey was also still angry with Wesley on account of the misquotations in the treatise on Original Sin. He might have been willing to overlook one such error, but two made in concert were more than he could stand. This could not have been due to negligence, he charged; it must have been deliberately designed to twist his meaning to make it appear that he believed in the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 102.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 202.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

doctrine of universal redemption. "My dear Sir, let me give you a Word of friendly Advice," he warned,

before you turn Turk, or Deist, or Atheist - See, that you first become an honest Man. They will all disown you, if you go over to their Party, destitute of common Honesty.<sup>1</sup>

Some have thought that Hervey was entirely unjustified in charging Wesley with deliberately altering his words. But it cannot be denied that this double error, tending to represent Hervey as supporting a doctrine central in Wesley's theology, constituted grounds for suspicion. Wesley later blamed the printer for the errors. This may have been the case. But it is also possible that Hervey's suspicions were well founded. That Wesley was capable of a certain freedom in "adapting" quotations is clearly shown by the following passage with which he concluded his Thoughts on the Imputed Righteousness of Christ, published in 1762.

Upon the whole, I cannot express my thoughts better than in the words of that good man, Mr. Hervey: "If people may be safe and their inheritance secure without any knowledge of these particularities, why should you offer to puzzle their heads with a few unnecessary terms? We are not solicitous as to the credit or the use of any particular set of phrases. Only let men be humbled as repenting criminals at the Redeemer's feet; let them rely as devoted pensioners on his precious merits; and they are undoubtedly in the way to a blissful immortality."<sup>2</sup>

By joining a question asked by Theron with a portion of Aspasio's answer Wesley succeeded in giving an impression almost exactly opposite to that which Hervey had conveyed in Theron and Aspasio.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 285f.

<sup>2</sup>Works, X:315.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Theron and Aspasio, I:65f.

Had Hervey still been alive, he would have been justly incensed.

### The Question of Authenticity.

It remains to say a few words about the authenticity of the Eleven Letters. Wesley and those of his followers who were also friends of Hervey preferred to think that the bitter spirit throughout the book was not that of Hervey. "And is this thy voice, my son David?" asked Wesley. "Is this thy tender, loving, grateful spirit? No, 'the hand of Joab is in all this!' I acknowledge the hand, the heart, of William Cudworth."<sup>1</sup> It was certainly true that this book was written in a manner which Hervey had never before used. It would have given Wesley much pain to have had to admit that his old friend had turned on him in such a manner. It was easier and more natural for him to blame Cudworth, long his enemy. Wesley knew that Cudworth certainly had had opportunity to make additions, and he knew that Cudworth hated him.

This view, however, did less than justice to Cudworth. His controversial writings were not normally as bitter as the Eleven Letters either.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the letters which have been quoted above show that Hervey was in no irenic frame of mind as he wrote his vindication. The same bitter spirit is evident

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<sup>1</sup>Works, X: 346.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. his exchanges with Sandeman.

in his private remarks about Wesley as in the Eleven Letters. He was rather sensitive and Wesley had provoked him. He was also in very poor health, and this condition may have helped to aggravate his resentment until it became rancor. At any rate, the most abusive passages of the Eleven Letters read no more like those of Cudworth than of Hervey. The editor of Wesley's letters notes that "the Rev. J.C. Nattrass found on studying Hervey's MS. that the passages which deeply wounded Wesley were Hervey's and not interpolations by Cudworth, as Wesley thought."<sup>1</sup> J.C. Whitebrook likewise says: "The eleven letters are Hervey's and agree textually with his extant holograph."<sup>2</sup> As little credit as this evidence reflects upon Hervey, it would seem to place the authenticity of the Eleven Letters beyond doubt. Nevertheless, it must be remembered that Hervey did not actually publish the book, and no one can say for certain that he would have published it had he lived longer.

The identity of the publisher of the surreptitious edition has remained a secret. Some have thought it was a ruse of William Hervey so that he could profit from the publication of the original manuscript. This might be true. Some of his statements in the preface are strange. He denied that he knew

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<sup>1</sup>Letters of John Wesley, III:371.

<sup>2</sup>William Cudworth and His Connexion, p. 9.



the publisher, but he admitted that he had been told that the entire impression had been given away.<sup>1</sup> He justified his publication of the Eleven Letters by claiming that Aspasio Vindicated was "so faulty, and incorrect, that but little judgment can be formed from it, of the Propriety and Force of my Brother's Answers to Mr. Wesley."<sup>2</sup> This is far from true. A comparison of the two editions shows that except for some insignificant changes and additions, the version which William Hervey published does not differ from the surreptitious one.

On the other hand, it is not clear just what purpose the surreptitious edition could have served William Hervey. His brother's friends were clamoring to have the manuscript published. If he had acceded to their requests it is unlikely that he would have offended very many. His refusal seems to have been mainly a matter of conscientious deference to his brother's dying wish.

Tyerman states that Cudworth was generally believed to have released the 1764 edition.<sup>3</sup> Certainly Cudworth had as much interest as anyone else in seeing the work in print. But there is no real evidence that he was the culprit, and the fact that he died in 1763<sup>4</sup> makes it rather improbable.

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<sup>1</sup>Hervey, Eleven Letters, p. vi.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Oxford Methodists, p. 330.

<sup>4</sup>Seymour, Life and Times of Selina, Countess of Huntingdon, I:338n.

Perhaps Aspasio Vindicated was the result of a combined effort. Support is given to this theory by Ryland who states;

Soon after Mr. Hervey's death, these excellent letters were put into my hands for twelve or fourteen weeks. From a principle of foolish and false delicacy, I did not take a copy of them, which I ought to have done. Happy for the church, the manuscript fell into the hands of three of my friends, who had more sincerity, zeal, and courage, than I had; and thus the manuscript was rescued from destruction: and the original copy at last brought to light.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ryland, The Character of the Rev. James Hervey, p. 10ln.

<sup>1</sup>Journal of John Wesley, V:102.

<sup>2</sup>Crane, From Particularism to the Age of Reason, p. 17.

<sup>3</sup>Works, X:337.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONTROVERSY OVER IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS

Wesley did not wait for the corrected edition of the Eleven Letters to appear. On November 12, 1764, he retired to Hoxton where he spent the next few days preparing a reply to Aspasio Vindicated.<sup>1</sup> His answer took the form of A Treatise on Justification: Extracted from Mr. John Goodwin. It was a condensation of Goodwin's noted work on justification. Goodwin, the only ranking Puritan to adopt Arminian views,<sup>2</sup> had argued that faith, and not Christ's active righteousness, was imputed to the believer for righteousness.

To this extract Wesley attached a lengthy preface in which he gave an account of his quarrel with Hervey and undertook to answer the accusations of a personal nature in Hervey's book. But he said that he did not intend to dispute about the phrase "imputed righteousness" nor about the doctrine itself. "I cannot explain this more fully or clearly than it is done in the ensuing Tract,"<sup>3</sup> he added.

Wesley made short work of the personal accusations. He classified them into twelve categories: (1) that he asserted

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<sup>1</sup>Journal of John Wesley, V:102.

<sup>2</sup>Cragg, From Puritanism to the Age of Reason, p. 17.

<sup>3</sup>Works, X:337.

things without proof. He admitted that this was true, but pointed out that his letter had not been designed to prove anything but only to warn a friend. Likewise he had printed it only to guard others from slipping into the errors it exposed.

(2) That he was self-sufficient, positive and magisterial. He was not conscious of this. (3) That he reasoned loosely and wildly. A letter would hardly admit of closely reasoned arguments, he observed. (4) That he contradicted himself. This charge Wesley flatly denied. (5) That he did not understand criticism nor divinity. "I am not a judge in my own cause," he said. "What I am ignorant of, I desire to learn." (6) That he acted in a manner unworthy of a gentleman, a Christian, or a man of sense. He was not conscious of this either. (7) That he was imprudent. The criticisms which he placed in this category referred only to some of his interpretations of Scripture texts with which Hervey disagreed. (8) That he denied justification by faith and was an enemy to the righteousness of Christ. He contended that the whole tenor of his writing, preaching, and conversation cleared him of the first part of this charge. As to the righteousness of Christ, he admired, loved, and embraced it as the ground of all his hopes. (9) That he was a heretic. Wesley offered to retract any errors which were pointed out to him. (10) That he was an Antinomian. He wondered if Hervey could be serious. No man held a higher view of God's law, he said. (11) That he taught "Popish doctrine." Wesley replied that he knew not which of his tenets could be classed as "popistical."



Universal redemption was no proof of this, he held, since all the Dominican Friars held particular redemption. (12) That he was a knave and a dishonest man. The misquotations which Hervey had cited from his letter and from the treatise on Original Sin were due to mistakes of the printer, he claimed.<sup>1</sup>

The Treatise on Justification was published at Bristol early in 1765. At the same time the preface was published separately as a 46 page pamphlet entitled An Answer to All That is Material in Letters Just Published Under The Name of the Reverend Mr. Hervey.<sup>2</sup>

At about the same time, too, Aspasio Vindicated was being republished in Edinburgh. The motivating spirit behind this move was John Erskine, one of the leading champions of the Evangelical party in the Church of Scotland and at that time the minister of the New Greyfriars' Church in Edinburgh.<sup>3</sup>

A number of Wesley's societies had of late sprung up in that city. They were related in the same unofficial manner to the established Church of Scotland as they were to the Church of England below the border. Erskine was concerned for the members

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<sup>1</sup>Works, X:337-346.

<sup>2</sup>Except for the first page and one line on page 33 this pamphlet appears to have been printed from the same type as the preface to the Treatise on Justification.

<sup>3</sup>D.N.B., s.v. Erskine, John.

of these societies, for he considered most of them devout and loyal members of the Scottish Church. It was not so much that they were children of the Revival that bothered him; he was a great friend of Whitefield. But Wesley was another matter; Erskine could not approve his views on predestination, perseverance, and grace. He felt that the issuing of Hervey's vindication in Scotland, where few copies had yet found their way, might help to convince the members of the Scottish societies that Wesley was not as orthodox as they had hitherto supposed.<sup>1</sup>

To the Scottish edition Erskine added a preface in which he accused Wesley of blending "a medley of Arminian, Antinomian, and enthusiastic errors" with some gospel truths, and stated that he felt it was high time to raise an alarm.<sup>2</sup> He quoted a passage from the Preservative Against Unsettled Notions in Religion in which Wesley had criticized the preaching of predestination and final perseverance in his societies on the grounds that these doctrines had had the effect of "deadly poison" on those who had not been reared and educated in them.<sup>3</sup>

Erskine's master stroke, however, was the quotation of a sentence from the Plain Account of the People Called Methodists in which Wesley had said: "It is a point we chiefly insist upon, that

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<sup>1</sup>Erskine's preface in Hervey, Aspasio Vindicated, p. iiif.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. ix.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. vii.

orthodoxy, or right opinion, is at least but a very slender part of religion, if any part of it at all."<sup>1</sup> Erskine interpreted this proposition as meaning that ignorance and error were as favourable to virtue as truth was. If men were once brought to believe this, he asserted, "there is scarce any thing so foolish, or so wicked, which Satan may not prompt them to, by transforming himself into an angel of light."<sup>2</sup>

Erskine's edition of Hervey's letters created a small storm in Scotland. Soon after their publication Wesley arrived in Edinburgh on one of his trips through northern England and Scotland. In his journal for April 23, 1765, he noted:

My coming was quite seasonable (though unexpected), as those bad letters, published in the name of Mr. Hervey, and re-printed here by Mr. John Erskine, had made a great deal of noise.<sup>3</sup>

On the following day Wesley penned a letter to Erskine accusing him of ushering into that part of the world "one of the most bitter libels that was ever written against me ..." But he said he had a warm friendship for Erskine and would not fight with him. On the doctrine of justification by faith he felt that he had been greatly misinterpreted and declared that he had never wavered in his position for the last 27 years. As to

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. iv. John Hunt says that by this quotation Erskine was able to raise again Wesley "the indignation of all Scotland." (Religious Thought in England, III:291.)

<sup>2</sup>Hervey, Aspasio Vindicated, p. x.

<sup>3</sup>Journal of John Wesley, V:111.

Erskine's main objection, Wesley declared that if Erskine could convince him that it was his duty to preach controversial subjects such as predestination, he would do so, but at the moment he thought it would be a sin.<sup>1</sup>

The public reply to Erskine's preface was left to James Kershaw, Wesley's travelling companion. Kershaw had been converted from Socinianism at Huddersfield by Henry Venn only four years before and had joined Wesley's band of itinerant preachers.<sup>2</sup> His answer to Erskine was a somewhat long and wandering performance entitled An Earnest Appeal to the Public in an Honest, Amicable, and Affectionate Reply to the Preface of Aspasio Vindicated.

He undertook to demonstrate that Wesley was orthodox on the article of justification by faith and had been so since preaching the sermon on salvation by faith in 1738. Wesley's writings, declared Kershaw, all showed that since that time he had steadily believed and uniformly asserted:

that the righteousness of Christ (including both what he did and suffered) imputed to us, and received by a true and living faith, is that which alone justifies any man in the sight of God.

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Works, X:355ff.

<sup>2</sup>D.N.B., s.v. Kershaw, James. See also Journal of John Wesley, V:75n.



that faith itself does not justify, (having no more intrinsic value than our works), but only as it receives Christ, and is itself the gift of God ...

Kershaw acknowledged, however, that Wesley held that all this was conditional. But the term conditional had been misunderstood. Wesley attached no value to the conditions of repentance and faith; he merely meant that there could be no justification without them. In this same sense he held conditional predestination, conditional perseverance, conditional justification, or conditional salvation.<sup>2</sup>

As proof of Wesley's orthodoxy, Kershaw quoted a number of passages from his various theological works and gave in full several of the Wesleyan hymns. He also quoted a passage from Wesley's Notes on the New Testament to show that Wesley held that there was no inconsistency between faith imputed for righteousness and justification by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ.<sup>3</sup>

In the letter to Hervey the doctrine had still been the same, said Kershaw, for Wesley had acknowledged that he was agreed with Hervey as to the doctrine of imputation and had distinctly asserted that Christ's righteousness was both imputed and

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<sup>1</sup>Kershaw, Earnest Appeal, p. 41.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 61.

implanted. Wesley's purpose in writing that letter had not been to deny the doctrine, but merely to caution his pupil against the too frequent use of a phrase which had been so badly misused by others.<sup>1</sup>

Kershaw thought that Erskine's alarm over Wesley's apparent rejection of right opinion was all due to a misunderstanding. It was a matter of definition. Wesley defined religion as consisting of "right temper, words, and actions." Thus to say that right opinion was a slender part, or even no part at all, of "right temper, words, and actions" was undeniable, for it could exist where the latter were not. He cited the devil as a case in point.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, the term religion was sometimes used to mean both the doctrinal and experimental parts, and Erskine had obviously taken it in this sense, said Kershaw. But it was unfair to criticize Wesley from this standpoint, since he held that it was a duty to strive after right opinion and believed that wrong opinion naturally lead to wrong practice. For example, it was obviously true that whoever did not believe the gospel could not be saved. But Wesley distinguished between essentials and non-essentials in belief. He did not include absolute predestination among the essentials.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 71f.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 128.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 113, 123f, 127.

Nevertheless, it was not doing Wesley full justice to criticize him for rejecting the doctrine of predestination, Kershaw contended. Wesley did believe in predestination, but it was a conditional predestination. Had he never seen the pernicious efforts of the belief of unconditional predestination upon some in England he probably would never have written a word against it. In Scotland the doctrine had always been taught as guaranteeing the faith and purity of the gospel, but in England some had used it as an excuse for doing without holiness at all. "Indeed," said Kershaw,

in Scotland, you have not seen those deadly effects possibly, and I believe for this very good reason, because that doctrine has been preached according to the sentiments of our reformers ...<sup>1</sup>

A few weeks later Erskine replied to Kershaw in a pamphlet entitled Mr. Wesley's Principles Detected; or a Defence of the Preface to the Edinburgh Edition of Aspasio Vindicated. He, too, expressed his desire not to enter upon a doctrinal controversy. His own preface, like Wesley's letter to Hervey, have been intended merely to caution those in his own communion.<sup>2</sup>

He denied, however, that Wesley had uniformly asserted justification through the righteousness of Christ alone since 1738. The passages which Kershaw had quoted, he admitted, had demonstrated that Wesley had asserted that doctrine, both in his

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 101.

<sup>2</sup>[Erskine], Mr. Wesley's Principles Detected, p. 19.

older and in his more recent writings. But it had by no means proved that he had done so unwaveringly.<sup>1</sup> Erskine pointed out that Wesley had published his treatise on justification, extracted from Goodwin, earlier that very year. There were few books in English "in which the Popish and Arminian objections against the imputation of Christ's active obedience have been more keenly urged."<sup>2</sup> The main design of it, he pointed out, was to prove that faith was imputed for righteousness but that the active obedience of Christ was not.

He thought that Kershaw had tried to wrap Wesley's account of predestination in obscurity and had ignored the important question - whether his doctrine corresponded with that of the Church of Scotland.<sup>3</sup> It clearly did not! He insisted that Wesley's sermon on Free Grace, preached in 1739, had been designed to "expose" the Calvinist doctrine of predestination. He had seldom seen a piece that was so bitter toward Calvinists; moreover, the consequences which Wesley had suggested in the sermon did not flow from the Calvinist doctrine. "God's decree compels no man to sin, and deprives him of no power to do good," Erskine declared.

You will say, there flows from the decree an infallible certainty of men's sinning, and perishing in their sins. I allow it: but a certainty no more infallible than would flow from the divine foreknowledge, which Mr. Wesley himself allows as a scripture - truth.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 18f.



Erskine was not attracted by Wesley's concession that the Methodist Societies in Scotland could be trusted with the doctrine of predestination while those in England could not. If human nature was the same in Scotland as in England immoral opinions must have the same licentious effects in both places. He remarked that he thought the real reason why the Methodists had not attacked this doctrine in Scotland as they had in England was

that they prudently conclude, a precipitate attack might alarm many of their new proselytes, occasion their forsaking them, and thus prevent that success, which might probably be secured by delay, till they gain a fuller ascendant over their followers.<sup>1</sup>

Because he was convinced of this, he said, he had felt it his Christian duty to warn those who believed in the doctrines of the Westminster Confession not to put themselves under the care of teachers whose principles obliged them to undermine that belief whenever possible.

In late summer, 1765, an anonymous pamphlet entitled John Against Wesley was published in London. No copy of this tract has been found but Green takes note of it in his Anti-Methodists Publications of the Eighteenth Century (No. 367). He said it was an attempt to show that passages selected from the Christian Library, the Preservative, the Treatise on Justification, and some of Wesley's other publications did not agree with each other.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

On November 24, 1765, Wesley preached in London a sermon entitled *The Lord Our Righteousness* in which he discoursed on the righteousness of Christ and its imputation. He thought that the dispute which had arisen involved no more than a difference of expression. He said that he no more denied the righteousness of Christ than the Godhead of Christ. Neither did he deny imputed righteousness. He insisted that he had always affirmed that the righteousness of Christ was imputed to believers.<sup>1</sup> "I myself frequently use the expression in question, - imputed righteousness," he said, "and often put this and the like expressions into the mouth of a whole congregation."<sup>2</sup>

He held that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to everyone who believes as soon as he believes. Faith and the righteousness of Christ are inseparable; to believe according to scripture is to believe in the righteousness of Christ.<sup>3</sup>

The righteousness of Christ is imputed to believers in the sense that all believers are forgiven and accepted, not for any righteousness or works of their own, but solely for the sake of what Christ did and suffered for them. "And this," he declared, "is the doctrine which I have constantly believed and taught, for near eight-and-twenty years."<sup>4</sup>

Wesley also affirmed that faith was imputed for righteousness, but held that there was no inconsistency in this

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<sup>1</sup>Works, V:242.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 238.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 245.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 239.

view, "... for by that expression I mean neither more nor less, than that we are justified by faith, not by works; or that every believer is forgiven and accepted, merely for the sake of what Christ has done and suffered."<sup>1</sup>

He also believed in inherent righteousness, but consequent upon imputed righteousness, not in the place of it, he declared. That is, God implants righteousness to all to whom he has imputed it, sanctifying as well as justifying all who believe in him.<sup>2</sup>

What he was afraid of was that some might use the phrases "the righteousness of Christ" or "the imputed righteousness of Christ" as a cloak for their own unrighteousness. "We have known this done a thousand times," he declared.<sup>3</sup> For that reason he was the more sparing in the use of these expressions himself.

Wesley concluded the sermon with pleas to the opposing factions in the dispute. From those who opposed the expressions he asked for leniency toward those fond of them. To the latter he allowed the whole sense for which they contended and agreed that they could use whatever expressions they chose, as long as they guarded them carefully against abuse. But he asked that they be not angry with him if he did not chose to use the same expressions quite so frequently as they did.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 241.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 244.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 245.

Wesley's sermon was published early in 1766. It was obviously a conciliatory gesture, but it only succeeded in arousing fresh opposition. In reply the Gospel Magazine<sup>1</sup> in March and April published "A Dialogue Between the Foundry and the Tabernacle" in which an attempt was made to show that Wesley's claim to have held and preached justification by imputed righteousness for twenty-eight years directly contradicted his arguments against it in the Preservative and in his abridgment of Goodwin's treatise. Said the Tabernacle:

... judicious and discerning christian cannot be so easily reconciled to an author, whose writings of this day flatly contradict his own assertions of yesterday. What opinion can one entertain of a person who is thus at variance with himself?

An anonymous pamphlet entitled A Letter to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley Concerning His Inconsistency With Himself<sup>2</sup> soon appeared also. The author said that he had taken the sermon The Lord Our Righteousness to be a public recantation of some of Wesley's errors, until he come to the passage where Wesley claimed that he had taught that same doctrine for twenty-eight years.

"Now, Sir," he said,

who are we to believe? That Mr. John Wesley, who in his Sermon says, "he has constantly believed and taught that the active and passive Obedience of Christ was our alone justifying Righteousness; or shall we believe that Mr. John Wesley, who has been for eight and twenty Years preaching and writing against Christ's Righteousness being imputed at all?"

<sup>1</sup>Vol. I: pp. 138-141 (March, 1766); pp. 182-190 (April, 1766).

<sup>2</sup>A manuscript note on the cover of the copy in the Methodist Conference Library in London gives the author as a "Mr. Parker at the King's Mews."

<sup>3</sup>p. 11.



The author set down several pages of quotations in two parallel columns. In one he put statements from Wesley's sermon The Lord Our Righteousness. In the adjacent column were quotations from Wesley's other publications (particularly from his letter to James Hervey and from the Treatise on Justification) in which the sense seemed contrary to the statement in the opposite column.<sup>1</sup>

The author accused Wesley of "flagrant contradictions, and palpable Inconsistencies."<sup>2</sup> Neither the Treatise on Justification nor the letter in the Preservative could be reconciled with the sermon, he concluded. If he understood the Treatise on Justification at all its principal design was to prove that the active Righteousness was not imputed to believers, but that faith was imputed for righteousness.<sup>3</sup>

He severely rebuked Wesley for twisting and turning about in an effort to maintain his consistency rather than confessing that he had been wrong.<sup>4</sup> He concluded by advising Wesley to repent of his inconsistent conduct, make a plain and open confession, publish his real principles in explicit terms, and then desist from further writing and speaking against Calvinist doctrines.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 5ff.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 9f.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 12f.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 28f.

In May of the following year (1766) Wesley himself again entered the dispute with a 27 page answer to Erskine entitled Some Remarks on a Defence of the Preface to the Edinburgh Edition of Aspasio Vindicated. Wesley was caustic: "My hope of convincing him is lost; he has drunk in all the spirit of the book he has published."<sup>1</sup>

He thought Erskine had made a vehement and unjustified attack upon him for saying that right opinion was a slender if any part of religion. "I instance in the devil," said Wesley. "Has he right opinions? Dr. E. must, perforce, say, Yes. Has he religion? Dr. E. must say, No. Therefore, here right opinion is no part of religion."<sup>2</sup> Wesley insisted that he had always believed and taught that right tempers could not exist without right opinions. But Erskine could not infer from this that right opinions could not exist without right tempers. Therefore, his charge that Wesley believed that virtue flowed from error and ignorance as readily as from truth was false and unjust.<sup>3</sup>

In fairness to Erskine it should be pointed out here that Wesley had somewhat obscured the issue. Erskine had not shown his conclusion from an inference that right opinions could not exist without right tempers, as Wesley insinuated, but from the original statement that right opinion was a small if any part

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<sup>1</sup>Works, X:346.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 347.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 348.

of religion. By the most rigorous logic Wesley was correct in maintaining that his statement did not say that right opinion was unimportant for religion. Nevertheless, the statement was remarkably ambiguous for one who normally chose his words with care. It leant itself to Erskine's interpretation as readily as to the meaning Wesley had intended.<sup>1</sup>

In his Remarks Wesley also reaffirmed that he had not varied "an hair's breadth" in his doctrine of justification from 1738 to the present day. Erskine's attempts to prove otherwise had been based entirely upon the writings of other men which he had republished. Conclusions concerning his doctrine could not be fairly drawn from the Treatise on Justification, he said because he did not hold himself responsible for every expression used by John Goodwin. But Wesley did not openly renounce Goodwin's doctrine; he thought that no one should condemn the treatise before reading it carefully. "And let whoever has read it declare, whether he has not proved every article he asserts, not only by plain express Scripture, but by the authority of the most eminent Reformers," he added.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>That the interpretation which Wesley gives here to his statement was his original meaning is borne out by a letter which he wrote to James Clark ten years before. He said in part: "Perhaps I have not spoke distinctly enough on one point. Orthodoxy, I say, or right opinion, is but a slender part of religion at best, and sometimes no part at all. I mean, if a man be a child of God, holy in heart and life, his right opinions are but the smallest part of his religion: if a man be a child of the devil, his right opinions are no part of religion, they cannot be; for he that does the works of the devil has no religion at all." (Letters of John Wesley, III:183.)

<sup>2</sup>Works, X:349.

Soon "An Answer to a Late Pamphlet of Mr. Wesley Against Mr. Erskine" appeared, subjoined to a small pamphlet entitled A Few Thoughts and Matters of Fact Concerning Methodism. The Dictionary of Anonymous and Pseudonymous English Literature gives the author as Samuel Martin, minister at Monimail.<sup>1</sup> The pamphlet was published in Edinburgh.

In his "Answer" Martin scorned Wesley's proof that right opinion was no part of religion. He contended that by the same manner of reasoning he could prove that figure was no part of beauty. "Every body would laugh at the proposition," he said,

but more at the medium I chuse for the proof; that deformity has figure, therefore figure is no part of beauty. This were trifling to the last degree; but what better is Mr. Wesley's devil.<sup>2</sup>

He thought it very strange if Wesley had published Goodwin's Treatise on Justification without approving at least its main design and chief argument, which was a defense of the Arminian scheme of justification.<sup>3</sup> Anyone who could find a consistency between the doctrine of justification in Goodwin's treatise and that in Wesley's sermon, The Lord Our Righteousness, was capable of believing that transubstantiation was a consistent doctrine, he declared.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>II:283.

<sup>2</sup>A Few Thoughts and Matters of Fact Concerning Methodism, p.15

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 17.



He felt that Erskine had good grounds for concluding that Wesley had concealed his genuine beliefs:

In one place he is Arminian, and brands Calvinistic doctrines, as they are called, with the most dreadful names; at another place preaches on the Lord our Righteousness; at a third, asserts free grace, etc. What can we make of such a man; his sermons,<sup>1</sup> his vindications, his pamphlets, destructive of one another.

Before turning to a review of the few remaining pieces written against Hervey's Eleven Letters it is necessary to pause here to clarify John Wesley's position in the controversy. Several opponents have now accused him of inconsistency on the matter of imputed righteousness. Since imputed righteousness was ostensibly the issue in this phase of the controversy, and since Wesley was Hervey's principal challenger, it is of some importance to assess the truth of the accusations.

In the first place, it is true that Wesley had been inconsistent in his attitude to the use of the expressions "imputed righteousness" and "the imputed righteousness of Christ." Although he refused to admit any change in emphasis, it is quite clear that following his dispute with John Erskine and the resulting decline in his Scottish societies, Wesley largely reversed his stand against the use of these expressions. This change can be seen in the following comparison of passages from the sermon The Lord Our Righteousness with passages from the letter with which he began the controversy:

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

Letter to Hervey  
Printed in the Preservative  
in 1758

"Then, for Christ's sake, and for the sake of the immortal souls which he has purchased with his blood, do not dispute for that particular phrase, 'the imputed righteousness of Christ.' It is not scriptural; it is not necessary."

Works, X:318.

"But the nice metaphysical doctrine of imputed righteousness leads not to repentance, but to licentiousness."

Works, X:320.

"This is the grand, palpable objection to that whole scheme. It directly 'makes void the law.' It makes thousands content to live and die 'transgressors of the law,' because Christ fulfilled it 'for them.' Therefore, though I believe he hath lived and died for me, yet I would speak very tenderly and sparingly of the former, (and never separately from the latter,) even as sparingly as do the Scriptures, for fear of this dreadful consequences."

Works, X:330.

Since it was not the actual doctrine of imputation which Wesley had opposed, but only the use of these particular expressions, his change of emphasis must be considered tantamount to a concession of the principal point in dispute.

Sermon  
The Lord Our Righteousness  
1765

"And, First, I would address myself to you who violently oppose these expressions, and are ready to condemn all that use them as Antinomians. But is not this bending the bow too much the other way? Why should you quarrel with them, for using the phrases they like, any more than they with you for taking the same liberty?"

Works, V:245.

"Neither do I deny imputed righteousness: This is another unkind and unjust accusation: I always did, and do still continually, affirm, that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to every believer."

Works, V:242.

"I allow you to use whatever expressions you choose, and that a thousand times over; only guarding them against that dreadful abuse, which you are as deeply concerned to prevent as I am. I myself frequently use the expression in question,--imputed righteousness; and often put this and the like expressions into the mouth of a whole congregation."

Works, V:245.

Wesley's opponents, however, attempted to go further and show that he had also been inconsistent on the actual doctrine of imputation. Here they were unable to make out their case. Quotations chosen at random from the 50 volumes of the Christian Library could hardly be considered Wesley's views. As for his own writings, he was substantially correct in maintaining that he had not wavered in his doctrine of justification by faith since preaching his sermon Salvation by Faith in 1738.

His doctrine of imputation is given concisely in the sermon The Lord Our Righteousness:

But in what sense is this righteousness imputed to believers? In this: All believers are forgiven and accepted, not for the sake of anything in them, or of anything that ever was, that is, or ever can be done by them, but wholly and solely for the sake of what Christ hath done and suffered for them.<sup>1</sup>

But Wesley did not make a distinction between the righteousness of Christ imputed and faith imputed for righteousness. Thus in the same sermon he could also say:

Faith is imputed for righteousness to every believer; namely, faith in the righteousness of Christ; but this is exactly the same thing which has been said before; for by that expression I mean neither more nor less, than that we are justified by faith, not by works; or that every believer is forgiven and accepted, merely for the sake of what Christ has done and suffered.<sup>2</sup>

In his Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament (1755) he had also refused to separate these concepts. His note on Romans 4:9 read:

<sup>1</sup>Works, V:238f.

<sup>2</sup>Works, V:241.



"Faith was imputed to Abraham for righteousness." This is fully consistent with our being justified through the imputation of the righteousness of Christ: That is, our being pardoned, and accepted of God, for the sake of what Christ has done and suffered. For though this, and this alone, be the meritorious cause of our acceptance with God, yet faith may be said to be "imputed to us for righteousness," as it is the sole condition of our acceptance.<sup>1</sup>

Wesley's alternate use of these two modes of expression seemed to his Calvinist opponents to be inconsistent, for they did not admit that faith was a condition of justification and so could not agree that faith was imputed for righteousness. But Wesley was undoubtedly correct in his stand. The question whether Christ's actual righteousness is imputed to the believer or whether because of Christ's righteousness a righteousness sufficient for salvation is reckoned to the believer would seem to be no more than a verbal distinction without practical significance.

The real issue which lay at the bottom of this controversy was neither imputed righteousness nor faith as a condition of justification. It was whether or not good works were a condition of final salvation. Wesley distinguished sharply between present and final salvation. He held that faith was the sole condition of present salvation (or justification).<sup>2</sup> But both faith and works were conditions of final salvation. Thus in his sermon The Law Established Through Faith he had said: "... faith is

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<sup>1</sup>Works, X:428.

<sup>2</sup>Sermon on Justification by Faith, Works, V:61; Sermon on Salvation by Faith, Works, V:8ff.



then counted to him for righteousness; namely, for preceding righteousness ... The Apostle does not say, either here or elsewhere, that this faith is counted to him for subsequent righteousness."<sup>1</sup> This point is further illustrated in his 1756 letter to Hervey. Commenting on Hervey's remarks, he says:

"We no longer obey in order to lay the foundation of our final acceptance." (Page 155.) No: That foundation is already laid in the merits of Christ. Yet we obey in order to our final acceptance through his merits.<sup>2</sup>

"In order to entitle us to a reward, there must be an imputation of righteousness." (Ibid.) There must be an interest in Christ; and then "every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour."<sup>3</sup>

Later, in the 1770 Conference, Wesley replied to a question as to whether his doctrine was salvation by works by directly asserting: "Not by the merit of works, but by works as a condition."<sup>4</sup>

For Wesley, then, there could be no question of Antinomianism because good works were the condition of final salvation, though not of justification. For his Calvinist opponents no such distinction was possible. The doctrine of final perseverance prevented it, for once a believer was justified he was saved for eternity. Wesley found from experience that this certainty too frequently led to laxity. Against it he set his own doctrine of salvation by works as a condition.

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<sup>1</sup>Works, V:454.

<sup>2</sup>Works, X:320.

<sup>3</sup>Works, X:323.

<sup>4</sup>Minutes of the Methodist Conference, I:96.

Three other publications appeared in the controversy in opposition to Hervey's Eleven Letters. All three were published anonymously and were issued in 1765, 1766, and 1767 respectively. The first, entitled Brief Animadversions on Some Passages in the Eleven Letters, was a 42 page pamphlet published in London.

The author lamented the fact that Hervey had submitted himself to Cudworth's subversive doctrines, and he criticized William Hervey for publishing the corrected edition of his brother's work instead of renouncing the surreptitious edition as a fraud.<sup>1</sup>

If the Eleven Letters was really genuine, he said, it certainly reflected the highest discredit upon Hervey. The consequence of the "wild Ravings of Antinomian Distraction"<sup>2</sup> contained therein would be the removal of "all the Obligations of Virtue, Piety, and Truth," and the introduction of "the most shocking Licentiousness in Life and Practice."<sup>3</sup> If believers were to be entirely satisfied with what Christ had done, it was obvious that they would feel little obligation to do anything themselves.<sup>4</sup>

Nothing could be further from the express declarations of Scriptures, contended this author, than Hervey's assertions that Christ had done everything necessary for salvation and that all

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<sup>1</sup>Brief Animadversions on Some Passages in the Eleven Letters, pp. 1-3.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 15

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

sinner had the right to claim this privilege without seeking prerequisites or performing conditions. The Biblical doctrine was explicit:

that unless we repent of, and turn from, all our Sins; stedfastly rely on the Death and Righteousness of Jesus Christ, as the only meritorious Cause of our Title to eternal Life; and add to these universal Holiness of Life; it is impossible for us to obtain the Favour of our Creator.<sup>1</sup>

In 1766 Some Strictures on a Few Places of the Late Reverend Mr. Hervey's Letters to the Reverend Mr. John Wesley appeared in London. The author was Vincent Perronet,<sup>2</sup> Vicar of Shoreham, one of the early Evangelicals and long a confidential adviser and friend to the Wesleys.<sup>3</sup>

Perronet declared that Hervey's Letters were written in "so disdainful, unkind, and bitter a manner" that it was unfortunate that they had ever been printed.<sup>4</sup> He thought that on the whole Wesley's comments on Theron and Aspasio had been justified and that Hervey should not have responded in the manner in which he had. Perronet admitted that absolute predestination was not to be found in the Dialogues but held that Hervey evidently owned the doctrine, even though he did not own the words. This he thought was shown by Hervey's concern to repudiate the idea that he held the doctrine of general redemption.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 36f.

<sup>2</sup>Dictionary of Anonymous and Pseudonymous English Literature, V:320.

<sup>3</sup>D.N.B., s.v. Perronet, Vincent.

<sup>4</sup>Some Strictures on a Few Places of Hervey's Letters, p. 24.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

He also observed that some of Hervey's expressions were of a dangerous and irresponsible character. "For instance," he said, "What can be more in the Antinomian style, than this sentence of Mr. Hervey - 'Believers who are notorious transgressors in themselves, have a sinless obedience in Christ.' ...?"<sup>1</sup> Lastly, he thought Hervey's teaching about conditions was unscriptural. The Gospel appeared to Perronet to abound with conditions and prerequisites.<sup>2</sup>

The last pamphlet to appear in opposition to the Eleven Letters was An Answer to Aspasio Vindicated in Eleven Letters, which was published in London in 1767. The author, who identified himself merely as "a country clergyman," was Walter Sellon, one of Wesley's first preachers and one of the first masters of the Kingswood School, and later one of Wesley's chief lieutenants in the third stage of the Calvinistic Controversy.<sup>3</sup>

Sellon's answer was a copious and detailed consideration of Hervey's Eleven Letters. It is difficult to summarize concisely, for he took Hervey's statements one by one and commented upon them. He was scarcely less virulent than Hervey had been. The Eleven Letters, he declared, was "such a medley of piety and bitter railing" as he had never before seen.<sup>4</sup> The surreptitious edition "was planned in the bottomless pit, inspired

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>3</sup>Letters of John Wesley, III:242. Also Journal of John Wesley, V:39n.

<sup>4</sup>Sellon, Works, II:165.



by the prince thereof, and published by a knave."<sup>1</sup> Instead of calling it Aspasio Vindicated, its publisher should have called it "Aspasio Vilified."<sup>2</sup> He accused William Cudworth of poisoning Hervey's mind so that "that weak man then drew his pen, dipt in Antinomian venom, and wrote with the utmost bitterness against his friend, to whom he lay under various and great obligations."<sup>3</sup> He was convinced that Cudworth had a large hand in the writing of the letters. He also sharply criticized William Hervey for allowing a corrected edition to be published in opposition to his brother's dying request.

Doctrinally, there was little new in Sellon's pamphlet, but he seems to have incorporated nearly all of the arguments used by those who preceded him in the controversy. He understood the four principal points maintained in the Eleven Letters as (1) the unconditionality of the covenant of grace, (2) the imputation to the believer of Christ's actual righteousness, (3) absolute predestination, and (4) unconditional final perseverance.<sup>4</sup> These tenets, he held, were all contrary to reason, to Scripture, and to the opinions of the ablest and most approved writers, ancient or modern; until the Synod of Dort none of them found general acceptance.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 178.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 174.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 166.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 307.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 307ff.

Sellon charged that Hervey had been guilty of unfairly straining and twisting Wesley's words. Wesley's doctrine was still the same as then he had first begun to preach publicly. Wesley did not object to the term imputed righteousness, which was sound and scriptural, but only to "the imputed righteousness of Christ, used in such a sense as to supersede all personal holiness ..."<sup>1</sup> In this latter sense it was taken by thousands, including Aspasio, Sellon contended.

Sellon's pamphlet called forth an anonymous reply entitled A Friendly Reproof to a Country Clergyman. No copy of this pamphlet has been located, but Green notes that it was very severe.<sup>2</sup> Green gives the pamphlet as written against Perronet's Strictures, but this is probably wrong. It was Sellon's Answer to Aspasio Vindicated that purported to be by a country clergyman. Moreover, the Gospel Magazine gives the Friendly Reproof as written against Sellon.<sup>3</sup>

Two more publications appeared in the controversy in opposition to Wesley. The first was a shilling pamphlet entitled A Dialogue Between the Rev. Mr. John Wesley and a Member of the Church of England Concerning Predestination. It was published in 1767.<sup>4</sup> No copy has been found, but Tyerman noted: "The author is a most zealous Calvinist, and attacks Wesley's views with great violence ..."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 186.

<sup>2</sup>Anti-Methodist Publications, No. 362.

<sup>3</sup>The Gospel Magazine or Spiritual Library, 6:134 (March, 1771).

<sup>4</sup>Green, Anti-Methodist Publications, No. 389.

<sup>5</sup>Life of Wesley, II:617.

Last to appear was an anonymous pamphlet with the exhausting title, The Jesuit Detected, or the Church of Rome Discovered in the Disguise of a Protestant Under the Character of An Answer to All that is Material in the Rev. Mr. Hervey's Eleven Letters to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley. It was published in London in 1768. The author asserted that Wesley's doctrine was essentially that of the Council of Trent, "only a little mellowed or softened by his manner of inforcing [sic] it."<sup>1</sup> To establish his argument he gave over twenty pages of parallel quotations. On the right he put remarks taken from Wesley's reply to the Eleven Letters; on the left, similar sentiments purported to be those of the Church of Rome, taken from Robert Abbot's A Defence of the Reformed Catholick of Mr. William Perkins, published in 1606. The conclusions are obvious. "This zealous Harveyan," commented the Monthly Review, "dresses up Mr. Wesley in the garb of the whore of Babylon, and then abuses him for looking so very like her."<sup>2</sup>

The controversy over imputed righteousness which had been started by Hervey's Theron and Aspasio was abruptly terminated by the expulsion of six students from St. Edmund's Hall, Oxford, on March 11, 1768. Perhaps it would be more correct to say that the issues of the controversy were absorbed into the third stage of the Calvinistic Controversy, which was precipitated by the

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<sup>1</sup>The Jesuit Detected, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup>40:70 (January, 1769).

Oxford expulsion. At any rate, Hervey lost his central place in the controversy. More important issues were at hand.

The expelled students were members of a new version of the Holy Club at Oxford and were all Calvinistic Methodists. They were dismissed for holding "Methodist" tenets and for praying, singing hymns, and expounding Scripture in private houses. One of their "offenses" was the belief in predestination. The expulsion raised a storm of protest. Whitefield, Lady Huntingdon, and Richard Hill all rushed to the defense of the students. Dr. Nowell, principal of St. Mary's Hall, answered for the university. The question whether or not Calvinism was the true doctrine of the Church of England quickly came to the forefront. Numerous pamphlets were issued on either side.

Before the dispute had time to subside it was given a fresh impetus by the Minutes of the Wesleyan Conference of 1770, which seemed to stress the value of good works in salvation. The final stage of the Calvinistic Controversy was now on in earnest. Under the leadership of Augustus Toplady, for the Calvinists, and John Fletcher for the Wesleyans, it continued unabated until its termination at the death of Toplady in 1778.





## AN EVALUATION OF THE CONTROVERSY

Both phases of the controversy aroused by Theron and Aspasio have now been traced to their conclusions. The controversy over the nature of saving faith gradually lost the interest of those participating and died a natural death. The controversy over imputed righteousness lost its identity when the issues were absorbed into the third stage of the Calvinistic Controversy following the expulsion of the six students from Oxford in 1768. This study will now be concluded with a brief discussion of the theological issues involved in the controversy and some indication of its effects.

In the first place, the relation between the two phases of the controversy should be noted. They were fought out separately. Although a few of the participants took an active part in both phases, each book or pamphlet which was produced can be assigned exclusively to one phase or the other. Nevertheless, there was a very close connection between them, for in each case the ultimate issue was the same: the relation between God and man in salvation, one of the most fundamental of theological problems. To put it simply, the controversy over the nature of saving faith was a concern with the practical issues for the sake of the principles; the controversy over imputed righteousness was a concern with the principles for the sake of the practical issues.

The controversy over faith was carried on mainly within the ranks of the Calvinists. It is true that two of the participants were advocates of general redemption, but both were rather out of place. Wesley was drawn in briefly to defend himself against some cutting remarks which Sandeman had directed at him in a footnote in the Letters on Theron and Aspasio. The author of the Plain Account of Faith in Jesus Christ did not understand the issues of the controversy and thought that Sandeman had misinterpreted the doctrine of "appropriating faith." Apparently all of the others, and certainly the two principal contenders, were avowed Calvinists, who accepted, at least tacitly, the position of the Five Articles of the Synod of Dort.

The particular problem with which these men were struggling was the relation of man's action to God's action in justification. Approaching the problem from the standpoint of God's absolute sovereignty, they presupposed that salvation was entirely the work of God. They also accepted unequivocally the Reformation emphasis upon justification by faith alone. In this light they were attempting to define exactly what man was required to do in the act of faith. They were thus concerned with the practical implications of their principles.

The other phase of the controversy went somewhat deeper into the basic problem. Wesley approached it more from the standpoint of man's responsibility. He was horrified to find Antinomianism creeping into his societies. From 1739 onward his

Journals refer again and again to specific instances of licentiousness. In nearly every case he traced the cause to the element of determinism in the Calvinist theology of the time, and he felt that it was necessary to oppose the Calvinist doctrines of absolute predestination, particular redemption, irresistible grace, and final perseverance with the Arminian tenets of conditional predestination, general redemption, and free will. The result was the Calvinistic Controversy, which lasted for nearly forty years. It stemmed almost entirely from the Wesleyan protest against the disastrous effects of Antinomianism which was encountered in day to day visits to the various societies. The controversy over imputed righteousness, as treated in this study, was simply the form which the Calvinistic Controversy assumed between 1755 and 1768.

The controversy over the nature of saving faith can now be examined in greater detail. Robert Sandeman's doctrine of faith represents an extreme position in an attempt to apportion salvation between God and man. Under the influence of Eighteenth Century rationalism,<sup>1</sup> Glas and Sandeman had assumed a sharp cleavage between man's action and God's action. They approached the problem of justification by faith from the double perspective of the absolute sovereignty of God and this dichotomy between Divine grace and human freedom. Thus they were driven into a concept of faith as far removed from human activity as

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<sup>1</sup>The influence of Locke has been noted.



possible. Faith became for them merely the knowledge of the Atonement, or, as Sandeman preferred to call it, the simple belief of the truth. He contended that this knowledge or belief was not the product of reasoning, thinking, or any other act within the domain of human activity; it was planted in the conscience by the Holy Spirit according to the Divine decree of absolute predestination. To give emphasis to the Divine character of faith Sandeman made no attempt to distinguish between the knowledge of the Atonement and the Atonement itself. He could refer to either with equal freedom as "the sole requisite to justification."

It is difficult to imagine a concept of faith further removed from human effort, unless it be an unconscious faith. Nevertheless, by referring to such interpretations as that in the Epistle of James and some portions of the Gospel of John, Sandeman was able to claim New Testament sanction for his doctrine of faith. But in doing so he failed to recognize the variety of meanings which the word has in the New Testament. He especially failed to see the difference between his own concept of faith and that of Paul, who expounds the New Testament doctrine of justification by faith.<sup>1</sup>

Sandeman had assumed such an untenable position that his doctrine of faith was attacked by Calvinists with views ranging from supralapsarianism to the moderate doctrine held by Hervey

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Inge, Faith, pp. 7-23.

and Cudworth. The greater part of the literature of this phase of the controversy was written against Sandeman. His opponents confronted him with two devastating criticisms of his doctrine of faith. They charged, first, that it was the faith of devils. As it was merely a knowledge of the Atonement, or the bare belief of the Gospel record, it contained no volitional element. They rightly pointed out that such a faith could be held by a person whose conduct was not influenced in the least by it. As Professor Brunner says: "The Devil would pass the most rigorous examination in dogmatics and Biblical theology with distinction."<sup>1</sup>

Of course, Sandeman was not deterred by this criticism, valid as it was. He readily admitted that the devils believed the same truth which saved man. The difference was that they were devils and not men. He based his entire doctrine of faith upon the fallacious idea that a belief of the exact truth which the apostles believed would be a certain principle of all good works. Fortunately, he guarded his doctrine against abuse by attaching a further proviso that no one could be certain that he had true faith until it proved itself by obedience to Christ's commands. But in thus escaping from the Scylla of Antinomianism he was caught in the Charybdis of salvation by works.

His opponents, therefore, charged secondly that there was no comfort in his view of justifying faith because there could be assurance of justification; his doctrine was really no better

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<sup>1</sup>Revelation and Reason, p. 419.

than justification by works. This criticism was essentially true. In conjunction with a doctrine of final perseverance Sandeman's insistence on proving justification by works made it impossible to obtain an assurance of justification. No one would know whether he had a justifying faith or not until he found that he persevered in good works. Thus the vital subjective element of faith - knowledge of forgiveness - was withheld.

Sandeman's opponents went to great lengths to point out that there could be no comfort in a mere knowledge of the Atonement as long as the believer did not have an assurance of his own interest in it. Sandeman continued to affirm that there was comfort in his simple belief of the Gospel. Most of his correspondence with Cudworth and Pike was devoted to explaining why. In neither case could he give a satisfactory explanation, and in the end he could only declare that it was a point well understood by all the Sandemanians. No one else appears to have understood it, however. To others it seemed that he had nothing more than a doctrine of salvation by works. Perhaps this helps to explain why Sandemanianism has nearly died out.

John Barclay escaped from the Sandemanian dilemma in a most interesting manner. He accepted the definition of faith as a simple belief of the Gospel record, but he cast off Sandeman's safeguard of proving faith by works. Thus he held that an immediate assurance of salvation was to be concluded upon a mere knowledge of the Atonement. A doctrine with greater potential-

ities for abuse is difficult to imagine. Fortunately, in practice Barclay and his followers added a stronger ethical element to their faith.

There are only two ways out of Sandeman's unsatisfactory doctrine. One is the way of synergism, accepting the view of a self-limited Divine sovereignty. This was the way taken by Methodist Arminianism and, more directly as a result of this controversy, by the Disciples of Christ in the United States. The influence of the controversy upon the Disciples will be shown presently.

The second way is to retain the concept of a full Divine sovereignty and to abolish the sharp line of division between human and Divine activity in conversion. This was the traditional Reformed position, and was held in varying degrees by Sandeman's Calvinistic opponents, although they were not entirely free from rationalistic influences themselves. This is also the position of much modern Reformed thought, being maintained, for example, by theologians of such divergent views as Principal John Baillie and Professor Karl Barth. Principal Baillie writes:

When I respond to God's call, the call is God's and the response is mine; and yet the response is God's too; for not only does He call me in His grace, but also by His grace brings response to birth within my soul.<sup>1</sup>

Professor Barth says: "Man acts by believing, but the fact that he believes by acting is God's act."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Our Knowledge of God, p. 234.

<sup>2</sup>The Doctrine of the Word of God, p. 281.



The "appropriating faith," as held by Hervey, Cudworth, Wilson, and several others in the controversy, was really a direct act of assurance. The proponents of this doctrine were not free from the influence of the same current of rationalism which led Sandeman into difficulty. They did not allow themselves to be carried as far by it, but their tendency to regard action either as Divine or human can be clearly seen in their limitation of faith to an act of acceptance and in their continual protest that they made faith not a condition of salvation but only an instrument for receiving it.

Sandeman's criticisms of this appropriating faith in his Letters on Theron and Aspasio really launched this phase of the controversy. His charges have been shown to be essentially threefold: (1) that appropriating faith was the belief of something not true; (2) that it involved justification by works; and (3) that it denied the comfort which belonged to true believers.

The first charge was largely valid. The proponents of appropriating faith readily admitted that what they believed for faith could not be said to be true before it was believed. Cudworth and Marshall were very clear on this point, as has been shown. Both helped to shape Hervey's views: Cudworth directly, Marshall through the Gospel Mystery of Sanctification. But all of them were convinced that they found a warrant in Scripture which allowed and commanded every sinner to believe that Christ

died for him. Thus they could preach the Gospel with conviction to all men in the same way that the Wesleyans, with their doctrine of general redemption, could do. This put vitality into the preaching of those like Hervey who adopted the doctrine.

Unfortunately, their failure to also adopt a full doctrine of general redemption made it impossible for them to say that what they believed was true before they believed it. This produced a psychological hurdle for their opponents, who claimed that it was really making something true by belief alone. It seems quite possible that the emotional element in the act of appropriation was the means by which this psychological difficulty was overcome. Whether or not that is true, once the act had been made the believer could be assured that what he now believed was true, and, consequently, there was no further problem.

The real difficulty with the appropriating faith was not psychological but rather ontological. A proposition cannot be made true simply by believing it to be true. What these men failed to realize was that it is quite possible for a man to be convinced of his salvation whether it is a fact or not.

Sandeman's second accusation - that the doctrine of appropriating faith involved justification by works - was partly true and partly false. He did a service to Christian theology in so far as he protested against the practice of leading sincere seekers through an assiduous struggle in which they sought for some emotional mark as a proof that they had been favored with a

"appropriating faith," perhaps pointed out most clearly the

true faith. Sandeman's alternative - to present the Gospel and challenge men to believe directly - was a healthy antidote to some current practices.

Unfortunately, Sandeman carried this alternative so far that he cut out even the volitional element in faith. In this respect his charge against appropriation was false. Hervey and Cudworth admitted that Theron and Aspasio had too many instances of struggles to obtain faith. They began arrangements to expurge these passages, without, however, surrendering their contention that Christ must be accepted as well as known.

Sandeman's third charge against the doctrine of appropriating faith - that it denied comfort to the true believer - was again partly true and partly false. It was true in so far as it was a protest against Hervey's contention that good works were no evidence at all of a true faith. But it was false in so far as Sandeman claimed that appropriating faith denied the comfort attending "the bare belief of the bare report of the Gospel." On the contrary, this doctrine went much too far in the direction of Sandeman's own position. It<sup>1</sup>'s proponents gave little place to repentance, reformation, and obedience as integral parts of faith. They held that these were properly fruits of faith and that whoever had "appropriated" Christ and his salvation could be certain that his faith was a vital principle which would produce all good fruits.

Joseph Bellamy, the other vigorous opponent of the "appropriating faith," perhaps pointed out most clearly the

fallacy of this argument. He called such a faith presumptuous and declared that a man's sins were not blotted out simply because he believed they were. Bellamy had a sounder doctrine of justification, holding that it required a faith which included repentance, conversion, union with Christ, and Christian obedience. Under the influence of Edward's theory of virtue, however, he held that no one could believe the Gospel until he first loved God and the Law with all his heart and was willing, if necessary, to be reprobated. Cudworth rightly pointed out that anyone who possessed these prerequisites was really in little need of the Gospel. But the dangerous tendency of Cudworth's doctrine can be seen in the fact that he also rejected as self-righteous Bellamy's view that only those who are united to Christ are justified.

The most striking feature of the controversy over imputed righteousness is the fact that it was fought principally over a minor issue. Leslie Stephen has remarked:

Controversies, which are afterwards seen to involve radically antagonistic conceptions of philosophy, begin by some special and minor corollary. The superficial fissure extends deeper and deeper, until the whole mass is rent in twain.<sup>1</sup>

How true that is of this controversy! Wesley began the controversy by protesting vigorously against Hervey's use of the expressions "imputed righteousness" and "the imputed righteousness of Christ." After John Erskine launched a quite successful campaign against Methodism in Scotland in 1765 Wesley changed his tactics and preached and printed a sermon in which he largely withdrew his opposition to these phrases.



This move drew upon Wesley the charge of inconsistency, but he steadfastly denied it. He even refused to acknowledge what must have been clear to everyone else: that he had changed his attitude to the use of the terms in dispute. However, it was not true that he had reversed his stand on the doctrine of imputation itself. Even in his opposition to Hervey he admitted that they were agreed on the doctrine. His only concern was to prevent its use in such a way that Christ's righteousness superseded man's responsibility to live a life of holiness, and he tried to do this by eliminating the use of these expressions.

Although it was beclouded by the disputing about imputed righteousness, the real issue of this phase of the controversy was the question of the conditionality of the covenant of grace. The Calvinists held that justification was unconditional, and their doctrine of final perseverance assured its permanency. Christ's righteousness thus became all important; man's obedience counted for little, though its necessity was maintained. In practice, however, the doctrine was too easily abused, as Wesley found to his dismay.

He was no doubt correct in his view that the licentiousness which kept appearing in his societies drew encouragement from the determinism prevalent in Eighteenth Century Calvinism. After all, he kept in close personal touch with the societies. He undoubtedly did a great service in protesting against this determinism and in emphasizing man's responsibility. But his own solution to the problem was not entirely satisfactory. The

deficiency of his own concept of faith led him to make an unnatural separation between present and future salvation. He could then hold that faith was the sole condition of justification, but at the same time maintain that both faith and works were conditions of final salvation. The difficulty with this approach was that it made a distinction between present and final salvation that in fact does not exist.

A more adequate solution to the problems of the controversy awaited a radical re-thinking of the doctrine of God, and a new understanding of the relationship between God and man. In three areas especially a new understanding of this relationship would have contributed to a solution. The first was in the conception of righteousness. In the forensic theology of the post-Reformation period the Righteousness of Christ was conceived as his obedience to the Law, performed in the place of sinful man and imputed to him in a legal transaction. The modern understanding of the Righteousness of God as something dynamic, as the working out of God's purpose in Jesus Christ,<sup>1</sup> would have made it impossible to carry on such a dispute about imputed righteousness.

Secondly, a new understanding of faith to include not only knowledge and assent but also a full commitment of the believer's life to a vital union with Christ, a commitment including trust and full obedience to Christ's commands, would have

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Brunner, Dogmatics, I:276ff. Cf. also Quell and Schrenk, Righteousness, pp. 42f.

largely eliminated the abuses which precipitated the controversy. Modern Reformed thought has returned to this position. Professor Brunner, for example, describes faith as including knowledge, trust, self-surrender, and obedience.<sup>1</sup> Professor Barth speaks of it in similar terms as knowledge, decision, and obedience.<sup>2</sup>

In the last place a new understanding of the place of the Church would have helped to make the doctrine of union with Christ more vital by restoring to it objectivity. As R. W. Dale<sup>3</sup> says, the Evangelical Revival insisted on the union of the believer with Christ but knew little of the union of the Church with Christ. Modern theology is recapturing the Pauline concept of the Church as the Body of Christ. Professor Barth, again, says: "Real service of God takes place in the fellowship of the one holy church or it does not take place at all." He speaks of a private individual faith as "the great error, which since the seventeenth century has prevailed in Protestantism."<sup>4</sup> Professor D. D. Williams in his Interpreting Theology 1918-1952 notes this new trend:

We see Protestant theology today trying to assert its own deeper essence. It is making as explicit as possible the truth of the ancient maxim that Christ and the Church belong together.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Revelation and Reason, pp. 34f.

<sup>2</sup>Dogmatics in Outline, pp. 25ff.

<sup>3</sup>History of English Congregationalism, p. 590.

<sup>4</sup>Knowledge of God and the Service of God, pp. 154f. Cf. Brunner, Dogmatics, II:376f.

<sup>5</sup>p. 129.

The permanent effects of the controversy aroused by Theron and Aspasio must be viewed in the light of the entire Calvinistic Controversy, of which the dispute over imputed righteousness was an integral part and the debate over the nature of saving faith a sort of adjunct within Calvinism. It cannot be said that the effects of the Calvinistic Controversy were striking. John Overton has declared that in a century of religious controversies this was "the most unprofitable and unsatisfactory in every way"<sup>1</sup> and left the question exactly as it was at the beginning. Dr. Elliott-Binns concurs with this view, adding that the literature of the controversy was "a mere rehashing of well-worn arguments and made no contribution whatsoever to learning."<sup>2</sup>

But this is not to say that the controversy must be dismissed as completely without significance. On the contrary, its greatest significance probably lay in the very truth of these remarks. The controversy brought a basic problem of theology into focus. The failure to reach a solution did not eliminate the problem, but rather served as an indication to succeeding generations of theologians that an entirely new approach was needed. In more recent times a reformulation of the doctrine of God has gone a long way toward meeting this need, but it can hardly be claimed that this late development followed immediately from the Calvinistic Controversy. Perhaps the most that should

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<sup>1</sup>Abbey and Overton, English Church in the Eighteenth Century, II:145.

<sup>2</sup>The Early Evangelicals, p. 406.



be said in this connection is that the controversy laid open the problem and stressed the need for a solution. The immediate result was that the bitterness which marked the controversy gradually died out and the questions were no longer pressed. The leaders of the opposing factions discouraged debate, and peace was once again restored to the Revival.

Two effects of a more definite and limited nature can be traced directly to the controversy aroused by Theron and Aspasio and are worthy of mention. First, the dispute over imputed righteousness dealt a severe blow to the progress of Methodism in Scotland. The reprinting of Hervey's Eleven Letters by John Erskine was the principal cause of this. Wesley's preachers witness to its immediate effects. Thomas Taylor notes that it caused a reduction in the Wesleyan society in Edinburgh. "These Letters fully answered their design," he said. "They carried gall and wormwood wherever they came. So that it was a sufficient reason for everyone to keep his distance, because I was connected with Mr. Wesley."<sup>1</sup> Thomas Hanby also declares: "Many were then brought to the birth, but by those letters their convictions were stifled."<sup>2</sup>

The historians point this out even more strikingly. Tyerman estimates that because of this dispute, Methodism in Scotland "was effectually retarded for the next twenty years."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Jackson, ed., Lives of the Early Methodist Preachers, V:29, 33.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II:145.

<sup>3</sup>Life and Times of the Rev. John Wesley, II:531.

M'Crie went so far as to declare in 1875 that Scottish Methodism had not yet recovered from the blow.<sup>1</sup>

Secondly, the controversy over the nature of saving faith exerted an important influence in the formulation of the doctrine of faith of the Disciples of Christ in the United States. The doctrines of the Disciples were shaped primarily by Alexander Campbell, the first important theologian of the movement. In his younger days he had had a predilection for the evangelical faith of Hervey and his associates. He testified that from the age of sixteen, he had devoutly read and relished the writings of Boston, Newton, Baxter, Owen, and others of evangelical views.<sup>2</sup> In 1812, at the age of twenty-three, he decided to go more deeply into the problem of faith.<sup>3</sup> Writing about this excursion later in the Christian Baptist, Campbell said:

I was once much puzzled on the subject of Harvey's Dialogues, I mean his Theron and Aspasio. I appropriated one winter season for examining this subject. I assembled all the leading writers of that day on these subjects. I laid before me Robert Sandeman, Harvey, Marshall, Bellamy, Glas, Cudworth, and others of minor fame in this controversy. I not only read, but studied and wrote off in miniature their respective views ...I found much entertainment in the investigation. And I will not blush, nor do I fear to say, that, in this controversy, Sandeman was like a giant among dwarfs. He was like Sampson with the gates and posts of Gaza on his shoulders. I was the most prejudiced against him, and the most in favor of Harvey, when I commenced this course of reading.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The Story of the Scottish Church, p. 487.

<sup>2</sup>The Millennial Harbinger, Vol. I, No. 3 (March 1, 1830).

<sup>3</sup>Letter in Richardson, Memoirs of Alexander Campbell, I:422.

<sup>4</sup>Christian Baptist, Vol. III, No. 9 (April 3, 1826).

Campbell went on to acknowledge his indebtedness to the controversy for his views on faith but declared that he had been influenced as much by the errors of the participants as by their virtues. He adopted Sandeman's definition of faith, but not the Sandemanian doctrine. "I disclaim Sandemanianism as much as I do any system in christendom," he wrote four years later; "but I agree with Sandeman in making faith no more than the belief of the truth ... I differ from Sandeman in making this belief the effect of physical influence ..."<sup>1</sup>

Campbell avoided the difficulty into which Sandeman fell by rejecting the concept of justification by this kind of faith. He adopted a position which an eminent contemporary Disciple theologian does not hesitate to call Semi-Pelagian in the sense that it was synergistic - "the active co-operation of the will of man with the free grace of God."<sup>2</sup> In his Christian System Campbell holds that it is not faith itself that justifies, but the acts of repentance, reformation, and baptism, which incorporate the believer into the Body of Christ, the Church.<sup>3</sup> This became the doctrine of the Disciples of Christ, and this controversy was the turning point in Campbell's thought.

What irony that this whole, bitter controversy should have originated in a work that came from the pen of James Hervey,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., Vol. VII, No. 6 (January 4, 1830).

<sup>2</sup>Robinson, What Churches of Christ Stand For, p. 52n.

<sup>3</sup>pp. 166f.

renowned for his gentle nature! And how lamentable that one who all of his life expressed his aversion to controversy, should have been drawn in his dying moments into the most violent religious controversy of his century! "To be of different opinions, at least in inferior instances," Hervey had written in his Meditations and Contemplations,

seems an unavoidable consequence of our present state; where ignorance, in part, cleaves to the wisest minds; and prejudice easily besets the most impartial judgments. It may also turn to our common advantage; and afford opportunity for the display and exercise of those healing virtues, moderation, meekness, and forbearance.<sup>1</sup>

But the issues at stake in this controversy could hardly be called inferior instances; they went right to the core of the Christian Gospel. When the Gospel was at stake, Hervey's tolerant spirit was matched by his zeal for the truth. Perhaps nowhere else is this ambivalence quite so well expressed as in the leaflet Hints Concerning the Means of Promoting Religion in Ourselves or Others, which, as one of his last acts, Hervey ordered reprinted:

Avoid all controversies; no good can come from disputing; but contend earnestly for the essentials of Christianity.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Works, I:391n.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., v:268.



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